GURU GOBIND SINGH

PERSONALITY AND VISION

SHIV GAJRANI

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Bajrang Singh

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PREFACE

Guru Gobind Singh was primarily a man of God. It was, therefore, expected that he would mainly deal with the socio-religious to life of the people. However, the socio-religious life of a country cannot be divorced from its political life and a religious preacher or well-wisher of society could not have a field for his activity, completely exclusive of political problems. Moreover, there were a few reasons which inspired the Tenth Guru not to choose a life of an ascetic or a recluse but that of an active and vigorous missionary and a preacher. He was, besides others, bound to come into contact and conflict with the government functionaries and also the *Subedars* of the Mughal Emperor. He observed with keen interest the functioning of the government. It may, however, be kept in mind that since his main field was religion and not politics, therefore we should not expect any systematic and scientific treatment of political ideas and institutions at Guru Gobind Singh's hands. Despite this, the Tenth Master not only watched the country's political life and corruption rampant in it, but he also made sincere and serious attempts to eradicate the on-going tyranny of the day.

Truly speaking, the various sections in this work are to be considered as only discussions (they are so as well in their manner of presentation) of certain ideas and ideals which Sikhism and the Tenth Master, as preceptor who brought them to perfection and culmination, may be said to have stressed and applied to individual and corporate life. These ideas and ideals are presented here as a segment of the totality of Sikhism, in a spirit of tentative formulation of their precise nature, direction and importance. These have not been intended to be taken as an exhaustive or definitive statement of the great work of Sikhism.

Moreover, Guru Gobind Singh's mission was to preach love, sympathy, lessons of charity and righteous dealing. The Guru's principal aim was to safeguard the religion and legacy of Guru Nanak. He gave the message of the founder of Sikhism and received martyrdom when communicating it. However, the story of Guru Gobind Singh's life is at once pathetic and heart-rending. Martyrdom of his saintly father – Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji- when the former a boy of 9 years, troubled by jealous relatives, persecuted by unscruplous foes, and betrayed by false friends, he lived to be able to secure liberation for his people from the cruel political yoke of the Mughal rule and the demoralizing spiritual subjection of the *Brahmans* as well as the hilly-*Rajput Rajas*. He didn't deviate from duty; instead communicated his message firmly and dauntlessly.

The period of Guru's advent was very crucial. The social system of the Hindus had completely demoralised the people. Everyone was selfish and lived for himself. The feelings of manliness, sympathy, fraternity as well as patriotism had completely disappeared. Even a desire to avenge any wrong was not felt. There was chaos and confusion all around. Nothing was safe. The whole mass of humanity had become spiritless. The Hindus were taken into captivity and women were sold in the markets of the frontier area. They were to put up with constant humiliation at the hands of the Muslim officers and nobles. Nothing including life was safe. The Hindu places of pilgrimage were desecrated; but no notice was taken of the conduct of the notorious elements who had been doing so and none was moved by the atrocities committed by the ruling authorities. A regular campaign, under official patronage, was going on to forcibly convert the Hindus to the Muslim faith. Those who refused to embrace Islam were tortured to death. Nearly all Hindu hearths were houses of mourning.

The serious problem was that the Hindus found consolation in their religion and attributed their troubles to fate and even resigned themselves to fate. They felt convinced that they were being punished for their evil deeds (*Karmas*) in their previous births and, therefore, their oppressors were not to be blamed. They were simply tools in the hands of God. What else could be expected of the people who had become mentally corrupt and so low as to acquiesce in the belief that even the Parshu Ram, annihilater of the whole *kshatriya* race, was an incarnation of *Vishnu* and was, as such, entitled to their homage.

On this painful and heart-rending scene, the Tenth Master, Guru Gobind Singh appeared, not only as a preacher to preach a new gospel to the oppressed masses, but he acted as a meaningful healer as well. He told the people to discard their worthless old traditions, beliefs and futile rites and usages. He asked them to throw themselves on the mercy of the 'Gracious Providence' and they would be protected and saved as well. The Guru gave the message that sin and suffering do not approach those who meditate on His name. He made the people understand and convinced them that all sufferings and miseries were the result of their own failings. He also told them that God sends no trouble and the oppressors were not His tools. The Guru emphasised that they should believe in one God and should love one another as brothers. Moreover, they should rise and fall together and resist the oppressors and root out all evil-doers. They should not fear death; they should regard life merely as a means to end - to attain beatitude at the feet of the Timeless Lord. In fact, the Guru made them men.

Guru Gobind Singh decided to remain his whole life a holy mendicant and a saint. Though circumstances turned him into a warrior, but still he remained ever a saint at heart. He battled and won, but did not acquire an inch of territory. It was he who gave to his people the concept of nationhood, a concept which embodied dedication in every detail of life and purpose to the Supreme ideal that is God. He became a Guru who was sought to be worshipped as God. However, he denounced this cult of the personality in such strong words as no one before and after him has done: "He who calleth me God, will for sure burn in the fire of hell. I'm but a slave of the Supreme. Being come to witness His play." Being son of a unique martyr, he not only laid down his life at the altar of the Supreme, but all his sons, his mother, and whosoever called him his very own. Succession by hereditary was abolished by him. He restored to the people, for the first time in human history, till then, what he thought, belonged only to them : sovereignty – both spiritual and temporal. And, Guru Gobind Singh made wisdom of the spirit the guiding angel of everyman's life. The Tenth Master spiritualised secular activity, and to worldly expectations he gave religious sanctions. A new meaning to life was given by popularising death for a cause, by the Guru. The Tenth Master abolished privilege by caste, birth, station and creed. He also raised the lowest equal in all ways to the highest. He restored to man his manhood, to woman her womanhood. He perfected a new religious discipline and was pressed to fight the others, yet he disparaged not differing creeds nor divided man from man. "Temple and the Mosque are the same," the Guru observed. After him, life was not the same again in our land. "Freedom, Freedom, Freedom" resounded from every heart – freedom from foreign tyranny as much as from what drags man down: superstition and cant and ego and self pity and covetousness, and worst of all, the joyless round of a living death.

At large, Guru Gobind Singh's personality as well as mission was extra-ordinary because he was a great saint, and an astute and selfless organisor, a fearless general, a master strategist and a gifted poet. His personality had this pecularity that all eyes and all expectations were directed precisely at that very point where he happened to be. He may specially be credited for attaining unparallel success in his struggle against tyranny and for the cause of righteousness. With the might of his courageous and dedicated followers and disciples, Guru Gobind Singh was able to resist the tyranny of the mighty Mughals, and left behind legends of extraordinary courage, boldness, and sacrifice.

Guru Gobind Singh always kept a perfect presence of mind even in the face of the supreme sacrifice of almost his total family for liberation of conscience and for the cause of righteousness. The Guru led a pious life, with firm devotion and dedication to duty and invincible spirit. He taught the humanity to lead a life of fearlessness, self-respect and highest possible moral values.

Guru Gobind Singh could be safely termed as an epitome of the ancient wisdom inherent in our culture, which laid stress on selfless service, renunciation and higher values of life. Gobind Rai sent his father to the lord of death, then his sons and, finally he himself offered to die to defend *Dharma*.Rarely do we find such a miracle performed anywhere in the world in the chronicle of time. Unsurpassed in courage and confidence, Guru Gobind Singh was Prometheus of rare dignity. Guru Gobind Singh, besides being a saint-soldier, was a writer of epic dimensions. The ancient past with all its ancient polity, preserved through the millennia, ran in his blood. Retiring into the seclusion of *Naina Devi* hills, he mediated and pondered over the way to integrate loose semi-tribal values of his people with the high moral, spiritual and conceptual values enshrined in our heritage. Guru Gobind Singh lived with mission and even wrote with a mission. He sought the blessings of the Omnipotent Lord to fight for the virtuous cause and die for

Dharma in concluding the first part of *Chandi Charitra* with the moving strain: *Deh Shiva bar mohe ehai Subh Karman te Kabhun na tarun* (Grant me, O Lord, this boon, may I never falter in doing noble deeds.)

Here was a unique titanic, preserver-protector of ancient values and promoter of revolutionary ideals, who created the institution of *Khalsa* – the pure to suit the dynamics of change. In the right classical tradition, the Guru realised the muffled steps of the everlasting past in his blood, 'the stories of our father in the pages of our destiny,' as Rabindranath Tagore put it. He sacrified his all, so that our countrymen may live, so that *Dharma* may survive.

Above every thing, Guru Gobind Singh had a complete hold on his disciples and followers because of his personal merits and magnificient personality. At the same time the name Guru Gobind Singh was a complete programme in itself.

- SHIV GAJRANI

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Dedication

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ਖ਼ਾਲਸਾ ਸਾਜਨਾ - ਤੀਜੀ ਸ਼ਤਾਬਦੀ, 1999

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CONTENTS

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Perface v-x

Acknowledgement xi-xii

Dedication xiii

1. A prologue 1-12
2. Guru's Ideology 13-20
3. Episodes of Significance 21-26
4. Guru's and the Hill Rajas 27-50
5. The Creation of Khalsa 51-68
6. Guru And the Mughals 69-82
7. Guru's Last Phase 83-94
8. Guru's Personality 95-126
9. An Epilogue 127-154

BIBLIOGRAPHY 155-160

1. A Prologue

Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth Master of the Sikhs, was born on December 26, 1666 A. D. at Patna, a big town of historic fame in the province of Bihar. At the time of his birth, his father - the ninth master Guru Tegh Bahadur was not there. He had gone to Assam (originally known as Kamrup) with Bishan Singh, the *Raja* of Jodhpur. Guru Tegh Bahadur helped him in the conquest of that province. As a consequence the *Raja* of Jodhpur became his ardent follower. This auspicious event was celebrated with great rejoicings at Patna as well as Kamrup. Soon the followers of Guru's house, from different directions, began to flock to Patna to have a glimpse of their future master. They also made offerings both in cash and kind. It was Kirpal Chand, the maternal uncle of the newly born master, who received them humbly and sent them back loaded with favours.

Guru Tegh Bahadur returned to Patna to join his family and also to share the joy after the lapse of 11 months. The birth of Gobind Singh added lustre to his already illustrious name. After a short stay there, the Guru proposed to his own mother as well as to his wife that they should go back to Anandpur Sahib. Guru Tegh Bahadur was deeply attached to this town which had been got built by the Guru himself for his residence, in the foothills of the Himalayas. However, both the ladies were reluctant because the Guru's mother and his wife-loved and preferred the quietness of Patna. Moreover, there was no ill-will which could take place in the minds of their jealous relations and where the plots and conspiracies of Ram Rai and other Sodhi claimants to the Guru Gaddi could do them no harm. Consequently, the ninth Guru returned alone to his home town i.e. Anandpur. It is really noteworthy to state that there were many who were unhappy and felt dismayed at the Guru's return. They had consoled themselves with the belief that Guru Tegh Bahadur had gone from the Punjab for good they were also making all possible efforts to prevail upon the Mughal emperor – Aurangzeb to appoint Ram Rai to the vacant Guru Gaddi in the absence of the ninth master. At the same time, a large number of his adherents came to receive and welcome the Guru. They felt overjoyed as they could receive from the Guru the solace of religion. They also brought with them the offerings they had deposited or kept for years. Some big as well as impressive mansions were got built for the visitors (Sangats) and the Guru's family.

The town of Anandpur, during those days, was, in fact, the place of bliss, as its name implied. No doubt, the ninth master was a saint immensely rich in the love of God as well as man. The Guru spent most of his days and nights either in meditation or in preaching to all those who came to his house that this world and its ties were momentary, that merely the name of the Almighty was real as well as immortal and that real pleasure lay not in the enjoyment of gross earthly joys but in losing one's self in the contemplation of the Creator. The writings of the Guru were full of transcendental spirituality. Undoubtedly, the moment the eyes fall on them, or the ears hear them recited, one feels thoroughly thrilled, one's mind and heart move with them. The luxurious nature appears to be absolutely subdued in the pious presence; though when this sacred effect is removed it may recover its power over the morally weak man, it may be said righteously that for the time the sacred influence lasts the worshipper feels, as it were, fully purified and fit to be received into the bosom of the Almighty. If this is the impact of the writings of the Guru, then the force of his presence can well be understood or imagined. No wonder, during this period, the whole of Northern India hankering after spiritual knowledge and enlightenment should have sought relief in a pilgrimage to Anandpur. If it is thought that the Lord sends his selected ones into this universe to emancipate the condition of the downtrodden and the fallen humanity, Guru Tegh Bahadur surely deserved to be blessed with a son worthy of being entrusted with a divine mission.

Guru Gobind Singh was being looked after and brought up at Patna by his mother, grand mother and uncle Kirpal Chand. At that time Guru Tegh Bahadur was busy in ministering the spiritual needs of his associates as well as followers at Anandpur. The Tenth Guru remained at Patna for nearly five years. We come to know from the Sikh Chronicles that a child at Patna, Gobind Rai (Singh) developed features and qualities which displayed without any doubt that he was destined to be a leader of the whole of humanity. This speaks about his personality while staying there.

Guru Gobind gathered around himself children of his age and played different games with them. He organised boat races, arranged pretended fights and richly rewarded those who won. In short, he made himself famous and popular, even as a boy. He also made himself dear to all who came in contact with him. Hence, his personality was unique from the very outset. When pressed by the repeated requests of his followers, Guru Tegh Bahadur sent for him to Anandpur. Men and women from Patna, young and old, became unhappy by hearing this news. Little did they feel, probably, that the small boy, whose parting from them hurt them so deeply, would grow to be so popular and immortal; and, that Patna, as his birth place, would be associated with Guru's name so long as the Sikh history lasted and the town would be treated as a seat of pilgrimage for ages to come.

Guru Gobind Singh's arrival at Anandpur was welcomed with joy. A huge crowd of men, women and young boys thronged on the roads and in the temple to have the privilege of having first glimpse of the

Tenth Master. Guru Tegh Bahadur celebrated this occasion by offering thanks-givings to the Lord-Almighty and feeding thousands of the needy. The news of his arrival spread within no time far and near. As a consequence, followers from Multan and Sindh, Kabul and Kandhar, Dhani and Pothohar and several other parts of the Punjab province brought for Gobind Singh all sorts of gifts, which he distributed amongst his playmates.

The gifts presented to the Tenth Master included horses of the selected breed from Khorasan and Persia, and arrows and weapons of the rarest make from Kabul and Kandhar. The future originator and organiser of the military strength of the Sikhs prized these presents most and even at that age took particular joy in organising an army of irregulars and wandering about the jungles at their head in search of *shikar*. The charming, promising, handsome and most pleasing face of the Guru, his princely bearing, his tender and noble look, his sweet Patna dialect, made still sweeter when it proceeded from his attractive lips, Guru's pleasing and impressive manners and his winning smile made him a universal favourite. In fact, his mother and grandmother generally complained that he stayed very little part of the day at home because the calls on the Guru were so many.

When the Guru was only seven years of age, he was placed under the guardianship of Sahib Chand *Granthi*. The latter was to teach Gobind *Gurmukhi* in company with Manya, who later was popularly known as Mani Singh, subsequently played a significant role in the Sikh history and died for a noble cause as martyr. Blessed as he was with an extraordinary genius and also the qualities of head and heart, the Guru thoroughly learnt the '*Adi Granth*' in a very short spell of time; and the Guru's recitations elicited popular applause. At this very time, Guru Gobind was placed under Qazi Pir Mohammad to learn Persian. Another expert *Rajput* was appointed to teach him riding and also the use of various weapons. Within no time, the Guru got complete hold on all those things which he was to learn.

Undoubtedly, from the worldly point of view it was the happiest period of his life. All that a human being could desire was his. He had a father, who was spiritual leader of mankind popularly known as '*Sacha Padshah*' amongst the Sikhs. Moreover he had laid down his life for a noble cause for which the history of mankind feels proud. His mother and grand mother were respected highly by men and women from all walks of life. The Guru spent his morning and evening in meditation and devotion while the days in hunting and other worldly activities. At night before he went to sleep, in the splendid residence set apart for him, several attendants sang for him hymns from the *Adi Granth* and really made a paradise, as it were, of his home. However, this was not for these earthly blessings and worldly enjoyments that Almighty had deputed him into this world he had been assigned a noble task of setting the house in order. This way, before he attained the age of nine, all this vista of human bliss disappeared and the stern Providence called the Guru to duty.

Hence, we can conclude from the events of Guru's nine years of life that his hold was complete on spiritual as well as worldly activities of life.

After the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur there was confusion in the Punjab, particularly amongst the Sikhs. Let it be noticed that the ninth master was beheaded and his head had fallen at some distance from the actual place of execution. However, it was picked up by *Bhai* Jaita at once and taken to Anandpur where it was cremated with high reverence. Guru's body remained lying in the dungeon. In the evening of that very fateful day when one of Guru's followers, Lakhi was returning from the fort with several empty carts, one Bhai Udai suggested Lakhi to remove the remains of the Guru, who readily accepted the proposal. What for the dusk of the evening and what for the clouds of dust stirred up by so many vehicles, the Guru's body was picked up and taken unobserved into one of the carts. Now, they rushed with the greatest possible speed to *Rakab Ganj* which was four miles from the place of execution. The other carts followed at their normal speed. When they had gone and disappeared as well as the dust cleared, the guard noticed the feat. So he at once reported the matter to the concerned authorities. Immediately a detachment of cavalry was despatched in pursuit but in vain. Before the troops arrived, the hut where the Guru's body was kept, was a huge pillar of fire. The courage and bravery displayed by Bhai Jaita, later was known as Jeewan Singh, was handsomely rewarded. It is believed that later he performed still greater deeds and won a name for all times.

According to another version, which, in part, is similar to that of the author of *Sair-ul-Mutakhirin* the emperor had ordered that the Guru's body be cut into four pieces and kept at the four gates of the city. To avoid this disgraceful treatment, *Bhai* Jaita suggested to his father that the Guru's body be taken away to some safer place before the emperor's men reached there. But, this was not an easy task to accomplish. The soldiers on duty (guard) peeped into the cell every five minutes to be sure and to satisfy themselves that all was right. *Bhai* Jaita even suggested that he should die; the Guru's body be removed at all cost and his body should be substituted in its place. However, parental affection and attachment didn't permit him to perform the proposed deed. His father told him that he was yet too young to sacrifice. After lengthy discussion and altercation, it was agreed that Bhai Jaita should cut his father's head and substitute the body of his father with that of the ninth master. This unparalleled deed was accomplished unobserved to the eternal glory of both the father and the son, *Bhai* Jaita.

After the last rites of the ninth master were performed with due honour, Gobind Singh was formally installed on the Guru-*Gaddi* in 1676 A. D. When the installation ceremonies were over, it was suggested that a campaign be organised and immediately sent to wreak vengeance on the Mughal emperor, Aurangzeb who was a real staunch *Sunni Musalman* as well as a tyrant. However, this proposal was not accepted because the Tenth Master was fully aware that his father had himself sought his end in order that by offering his life he might set an example of self-sacrifice for the cause in which he had great belief as well as to the oppressed community which he hailed and thereby create in them a feeling of resistance to authority which was knowingly being misused in denationalising them and in compelling them to accept ways and beliefs in which they could not find beauty. He also by this act created in them the feeling of love for their soil. He trusted that his life's mission lay in nurturing and strengthening this feeling and in making his people self-respecting and self-reliant. Consequently, from this very day onwards all his attempts and efforts were directed to bring about this result.

Though quite young in age the Guru was alert and wise enough to feel and understand that all the ills from which the people had been suffering proceeded not from without but from within. In fact, their own social fabric was not based on sound principles. Even their religious convictions were sufficiently weak. If depending totally upon the 'Timeless One' they performed their duties to themselves and to their land properly no external enemy could dare and think do them any harm. If, on the other hand, they were absorbed in compassing their individual end and disregarded communal interest they must fall an easy prey into the hands of some enemy or other. He, therefore, did not favour any suggestion of war but devoted himself to constructive works. He spent the later part of his life on a struggle with the imperial power. Here, it is to be noted that this struggle was the result of the machinations of *Raja* Bhim Chand of Bilaspur. This state was located in the Southern part of the Himalayas. Even other hill *Rajas* joined hands with him for their personal reasons. They exhausted their total resources in endeavouring to destroy the Guru's power as well as position as would be discussed later on.

Guru Gobind Singh, at this time, was only a lad and to start such a great task, at that tender age, would have been simply suicidal or a miracle. The

Guru devoted his full time to self-culture. A number of prominent writers in verse (poets) were attracted to his court. They hailed from all places of learning. Guru Gobind Singh employed them in preparing vernacular editions of some of the selected works in *Sanskrit*. The Guru woke up quite early in order to perform ablutions. After reciting '*Japji*' and paying his reverence to his grandmother and mother he went to the prayer meeting where his followers had already assembled. There he heard the singing of hymns in praise of the Almighty. After this, he himself recited a '*Katha*' from '*Adi-Granth*' and then surfeited the yearning of large congregations that everyday came from the far-off regions of the country including the North-West frontier. It is really surprising to note that he himself looked to the distribution of meal (*langer*) to the poor and the visitors as well. The rest of the day he spent at his splendid residence. He also went out for sports if the weather was fine and pleasing. He loved manly games which necessitated the employment of many a brave spirit. The sons and grandsons of the brave and devoted warriors who had served under the Sixth Guru were sent for and duly entertained. Many of them earned great fame in the history of the Sikhs. If the weather was bad, the Guru stayed at home and satisfied his literary and intellectual appetites in selected company. In the evening before the dark approached, the Guru went to the congregation place and remained there until late in the night. The morning programme was repeated.

The audience was entertained - sometimes with recitations from '*Ad Granth*' or '*Ramayana*', '*Mahabharta*' and even '*Hanuman Natak*', and many times with stanzas of his own compositions. All those poets whose composition had been influencing the destinies of nation were more or less inspired, but they could not compete with their master as very few had Guru Gobind Singh's power of expression. The Guru's poetry was full of force and pathos as well as purity of style. In his writings we notice the sublimity of purpose. These qualities make the Guru's writings simply charming and highly impressive.

To this day even if a coward reads or hears them recited he is sure to be at once stimulated into action. It was this force of stirring up men's best feelings that, more than any thing else enabled him to have such a vast impact over their hearts. And what is especially worth stating is that this might was used by the Guru in elevating his followers and not in exciting their gross feelings to attain any unworthy object or goal.

Duni Chand, a trader from Kabul, the Capital of Afghanistan, known for the manly bearing and large-heartedness of its people, visited the Guru on the day of *Baisakhi*. This festival had its own importance. Duni Chand gifted the Guru with a woollen tent. It even surpassed in excellence the one Emperor Aurangzeb had with him. After it was installed in the open ground, the visitors, who had come from different parts, on this festive occasion, were not only impressed but also astonished to see its elegance. They saw thereon, embroidered in gold and silver, representation of all that was grand and beautiful in nature. They were much delighted to see its artistic works. They had high praise and feelings of honour for Duni Chand and other followers of the Guru who had come from Balkh, Bokhara and Kandhar. In fact, the said gift had been prepared with their joint expense and labour.

On the occasion of Diwali every year *Raja* Rattan Rai of Kamrup (Assam) used to come to see Guru Gobind Singh. Even his father, Ram Rai had remained an admirer of Guru's father. *Raja* Ram Rai had no child and as a consequence he always remained unhappy and sad. But when he was blessed by Guru Tegh Bahadur, he got a son who was named Rattan Rai. After Ram Rai's demise, Rattan Rai succeeded his father to the throne. Now, he wanted to pay respects to Guru Gobind Singh whose father was the great benefactor of Rattan Rai. So, he asked his mother to accompany him to Anandpur to pay reverence to the Tenth Master. The mother very gladly accepted this proposal while expressing her willingness to accompany her son Rattan Rai. Finally, both of them along with a group of persons of high ranks started for

Anandpur. They also took with them costly presents. On reaching Anandpur, they were kept in a tent stated above, at the sight of which the *Raja* was so astonished that he forgot the pomp and show of his own court. Next day, *Raja* Rattan Rai presented the Guru an elephant known as *Pershadi*. The elephant's forehead was white like snow, and saddled with a seat wrought in gold. Beautiful ponies, a curious weapon which when unfolded became by turns a spear, sword, gun and pistol as also a sandal wood *chowki* with carved stands, a garland of pearls and many *thaans* of Dacca muslin were other gifts presented to him. All these gifts were graciously accepted. *Raja* too was given a place of honour in the reception hall. At the very outset, the Guru enquired about the health of the *Raja* and soon after he delivered a sermon on several aspects of religion.

Let it be noted that a number of Brahmans had accompanied the *Raja* of Assam. When they heard the Guru's discourse, they were surprised to see Guru's deep insight into the domain of religion and philosophy. The *Raja* too was dazzled by the Guru's heavenly beauty. Next day, the mother and the wife of the *Raja* visited the Guru who blessed both of them. They too received the solace of religion from the Tenth Master. During his stay with the Guru he was treated most tenderly. The *Raja* regularly attended the Guru's *darbar* and participated in the divine service every morning. During the day he accompanied the Guru's sporting parties and enjoyed the real pleasure in the Guru's company. In brief, the *Raja* was deeply moved with all that he himself had witnessed and experienced at Anandpur. On his return, he got constructed a temple in honour of the Guru in his state where to this day the Sikhs love to visit it and attach due importance to this religious monument.

By the time Guru ascended the Guru *Gaddi*, the *masands* had become corrupt. In fact, this institution had become a perfect scandal. The *masands* were highly respected by the followers of the Guru's house, because they were considered the representatives of the Guru, in their spheres of work. Especially to those who, for one reason or the other, could not visit the Guru in person and pay their reverence. These *masands* were as good objects of profound respect as the Guru himself. The majority had submitted to several temptations to which they were exposed and made themselves nasty to the people. Most of the Guru's followers were very simple, so they failed to collect courage to convey to their master the shameless obscenities committed by them (*masands*). At last, a few itinerant play-wrights brought the nefarious deeds of the *masands* to the Guru's notice, when the latter was holding a darbar. It so happened that they got an opportunity to display their art of drama. One of them acted as a *masand* and another a dancing girl. With two male attendants and riding a horse the *masand* along with his armour went to the house of a poor follower. Not finding the owner of the house he cursed and abused him in a loud voice which attracted the follower's wife to the door. On seeing the *masand* she, at once, fell at his feet and requested for his blessings but she received a kick as its reward. She was ordered to arrange for a number of beds. She brought the best one's she had at home but the *masand* disapproved them and threw these away into the streets. Now, she borrowed better beds from a neighbour. After this one of the young daughters of that lady was asked to shampoo the dancing girl and send the second one after her father. The servant of the *masand* too was asked to provide as much hay and fodder for the horses as they wished; but when *Nehavi* (a type of mixed fodder) was not forth coming, the anger of the *masand* crossed all limits. He was about to beat the lady physically when her husband returning from his work fell at his (*masands's*) feet, as usual, pray for his mercy as well as blessings. However, being poor he could not present him a silver coin. This coupled with his wife's inability to provide *Nehari* for the ponies added fuel to the fire of the *masand*. To escape the wrath of the *masand*, he mortgaged his wife's ornaments and brought provisions to serve rich meal to him and his paramour.

The dishes served to them didn't include meat and liquor so these were thrown to dogs. Now, the man mortgaged a piece of his land and with the amount thus obtained, he provided such dishes as he was ordered to do and made presents of cash and clothes to them, and also to their male attendants. Next morning when the *masand* was about to leave the place he asked for the hand of one of his daughters for his attendant, but as she had already been betrothed, the man was unable to meet his obnoxious demand. As a consequence he was rewarded with an imprecation (curses). The poor fellow wept in distress; he wished they had been rich enough to satisfy their guests and could get better treatment at their hands. Now, the man remarked that the *masand* was the Guru's agent/representative and therefore, what he said and did must result in lasting good to them.

Guru Gobind Singh had already heard about the misdeeds of the *masands*. He was really sick of this institution. Now, the very ugly picture drawn before the Guru drew forth tears from his eyes. The Guru thanked the performers for their enabling him to come to the conclusion on a matter of such serious nature. Consequently, the Guru sent several messengers to look into the complaints of his disciples, then to enquire thoroughly about these complaints and finally take the culprit *masands* to task according to their deserts. Some were physically penalised; many were made to return their ill-gotten wealth to the real owners; while the few who were innocent were let-off and sent back duly rewarded. Thus, the order of *masands*, soon ceased to exist. The Sikhs were, henceforward, forbidden to hold any religious intercourse or relation with them.

2. Guru's Ideology

Guru Gobind Singh, like the founder of Sikhism, believed in the Unity of God and also taught the belief in one great God, who is timeless, shapeless and formless. He held that the Almighty is Just, Merciful, All powerful, Omniscient and All loving. He is not born, He never believes in any belief, god or goddess, He never dies. The Guru, therefore, told his disciples and followers in clearest possible manner and language that he should not be regarded as an incarnation of the Deity; and those who considered him God would be thrown into hell. He preached that created objects should not be worshipped, instead only Creator is to be worshipped. He alone should be regarded *Parameshar* primeval or very ancient Being. God is unconquerable and indestructible. He himself has the power of making and destroying. Why should He have allowed himself to be considered to be a particular estate. The claimant after divine honours was unable to protect himself from the blow struck by the Angel of Death. He can not take any one across who himself was drowned in the ocean of fear. Especially persons who are feared of 'Death' should seek shelter with the God. Number of passages are extant over his writings which all intend to display and prove, without any doubt that the Tenth Master did not believe in the notion and theory of God's incarnation. He too did not believe in the worship of images. He openly and firmly opposed and denounced image-worship.

Of course, Guru Gobind Singh held all great men in high esteem and valued their all good-works, but he had no faith in the so called revealed books. Another significant point worth citing is that before the arrival of Europeans in our country; mainly when the *Brahmans* were in ascendency people were taught to attach too much significance and value to *Pranayam* and to several other austerities, but the Tenth Master had strongly denounced these practices which were absolutely meaningless.

Guru Gobind Singh belonged to the class of great and pious men. Though all of them preached and taught their ideas; they even suffered death for the right cause as well as for upholding them; yet they resented and strongly opposed the use of force in matter of belief. He could see God in all things like the '*Sufis*' and '*Vedantis*' of the higher category. The Guru regarded it a sacrilege to look down on any human being, may he be humble or low placed. Also, the Tenth Master, rejected the idea of caste and creed being the selected people of the Lord of the Universe, or that there was anything inherent in any class of men that made them incapable of longing after higher life. The Guru denounced firmly the practice of making the Almighty responsible .for the various so-called crusades that waged to enslave or exterminate feeble races. Guru Sahib laid so much emphasis in his writings on no other point as on the all loving nature of God.

Guru Gobind Singh observed that the man who always recites and meditates on the Almighty and does not entertain any one except the One; who adorns himself with the belief in the love of God; who denounces fasts and shrine-worship; who does not believe in alms-giving, commiseration, asceticism and continence, recognises not any other save the one; in whose heart burns the light of the Lord alone deserves to be known as a true person. The new creed which was created by the Tenth Master is popularly known as the *Khalsa-Panth* and its members are well known as *Khalsas*-the pure ones. But the baptism of the spirit and the sword did not produce such persons. Having an iron-will the baptised easily conquered their passions and hence obtaining supremacy over the foe within them, they became victors of the world outside. In reply to an order issued by the Guru a large number of people came to Anandpur to get baptised and groups of the disciples were sent all round the country to spread the new Gospel.

The preachers, who travelled from place to place, met with considerable success and not many years passed before a group of dedicated and earnest men gathered round the banner of the Guru's new creed. Its rise, however, failed to draw-out feeling of gratefulness or even of praise from the hearts of the caste people generally. Besides, it generated enmity and hostility in all conservative centres. For some time, this opposition was not a pronounced one; but in proportion as the number of converts to the new creed increased; their open disregard of old faith and rituals led to a bitterness which soon assumed a serious dimension. People forgot the blessings they had obtained from the Sikh religious system. The purity and firmness of its basic principles was fully ignored. They held the new doctrines as contrary to the accepted beliefs in religion and thought it an act of merit to do all they could to prevent their getting hold over man's mind.

However, as has been the case everywhere the opposition of the conservative element strengthened still more the hearts of the reformers and bound them together more intimately. The only sight of a Sikh made another Sikh jovial and bold. In brief, the Sikhs of yester-years (those times) shared their grief and happiness with each other and as they were devoutly or thoroughly religious, sacrificing or dedicated as well as confiding, they were able to take collective and united action in several matters concerning man's life.

On Guru's instructions, special festivals were organised and celebrated. These were well attended. People arrived from far away areas to assemble in "a common worship and share in a common amusement". Because these great national festivals and gatherings were of unique significance and value in Grecian history they played not a small and insignificant role in the Sikh history and their evolution. In reality, the Sikhs were of great utility and use in "fostering a common national pride, a sound physical training, intellectual vigour and emulation and a healthy desire for success in every kind of competition, where the reward consisted chiefly in the high opinions won from their fellowmen."

At this time *Raja* Bhim Chand of Bilaspur, a prominent hill state, visited Anandpur. Several other hill-*Rajas* accompanied him. They all were received and welcomed by the Guru in an open *Darbar*. The Tenth Master frankly and boldly asked them and the other Hindu-leaders who had assembled there on this occasion, to join hands with him, in his task of transformation. The Guru also told them that their ancestors were the Lord's paramount in the country. They made and administered laws according to their needs. From time immemorial they were habitual to receive homage from contemporary mighty rulers and persons of prominence and influence. Their people were happy and prosperous. In religion, as in arts, nations of the world regarded it a right to follow their lead. However, the state of things had, then, undergone an absolute change. They were no more a self-governing conscientious and sacrificing men. Their religion was rejected. Their men were converted into slaves and their women were forcibly removed into the '*harem*' of the Turks and their children were sold and purchased in the market of Kabul and Kandhar for a '*penni*' a head. They were no masters, but slaves in their own country, incapable of doing a good turn to themselves and others.

Now, a question arises, what led to this? Surely they had not changed; neither the elements had grown fickle in their serving with kindness. The rivers, which watered their fields and gardens as well as quenched their thirst, were fed by the same Himalayas. The same soil provided them various varieties of corn and delicious fruits. The same sun and air refreshed their souls and purified their homes. Thousand and one other blessings existed as of yore. Obviously, it was their fault. They had stopped worshipping the One. Stone images and even stone had taken the place of the Almighty. As a consequence, they were deprived of the mere source of goodness. This resulted in the destruction of fellow-feelings in their minds. Their religion was merely an hallucination. It could only be felt but didn't exist.

Even their social order was worse still. Selfish principles were its base that brought evil to several and good to few. Accordingly, with an objective to tie people into one united whole, in fact, it engendered and nurtured man-hatred. They every day witnessed the sight of large number of Hindus overawed by a few men of the conquering race. They too noticed that the members of this race were mighty because they were united whereas the Hindus would not suffer for each other, because they had become selfish and self-centred. If, at all still they wished to have some place among the living and developed nations of the world, he would advise them to enter into the fold of the *Khalsa Panth* and feel saved from the otherwise inevitable decline and extinction.

However, strong and pathetic appeal couldn't move the stone-hearted hill-*rajas*, because they had become dead, of course, after losing manliness as well as values. Instead their reply was: "The Guru being gifted with miraculous powers could well think and afford to resist the powerful Mughals. He was, moreover, a '*Faqir*' having no soil or estate of his own. Wherever he lived was his home whereas this was not the case with them. They were worldly men having much to lose." They also held, "The Mughals would not take note of him as well as his activities seriously; for they knew that they could not wrest from him any territory or treasure. But what would be their position? They would be harassed, oppressed and finally turned out from the soil and state of their ancestors and would be either slain or sold as slaves. They fully felt convinced that the Mughal power could not be challenged. They considered the expectations raised by the agitation as simply idle dreams." The socio-relgious propaganda of the Tenth Master was yet little acceptable to them. They refused to believe that only ritual or ceremony could derive out the tyrant from the base-born or that any good could come out of mixed eating and intermingling with the low castes who formed the major portion of his followers. They did not find any fault in idols' worship and they didn't find any cause why they should not stick to their old ways and beliefs. They visited Anandpur out of curiosity only to find out how the low castes as well as down trodden looked in their new garb. The first nine Gurus had continued themselves to the preaching of Lord's name and impressing upon the people the value and significance of '*Bhakti*' above all other things. The traditional ancient order was not at all disturbed by them, nor had they introduced any revolutionary measure or movement. They simply desired to be understood and followed that these changes were not acceptable to them.

It will not be out of place to mention that the Tenth Guru wanted that all must come into the fold of one religion or faith, so that the distinction, between them i.e. the Hindus and the followers of the new faith might disappear and all the four castes of Hindus, for each of which the *Shastras* has prescribed a different creed, might leave that creed and deal with each other according to one creed; that they must regard one another as equals and none should feel as well as think himself superior to another. They must forget all pilgrimages such as the *Ganges*, etc. given in the *Vedas* and *Shastras*. With the only exception of Guru Nanak - the founder of the Sikhism, and his successors, none like Rama, Krishana, Brahma and Devi etc. should be believed in. And, after taking Guru's *Pahul*, people belonging to these four castes may eat out of one vessel and may follow each other. Such other great ideas were also taught by the Tenth Master. But, when the people listened to him, several *Brahmans* and *Kshastriyas* woke-up and observed that they would never accept a creed which opposed their religious scriptures. They also made clear that they would not leave the ancient religion and also social order of their forefathers. They would not follow the preachings of Gobind Singh whom they thought was a very youngman. After saying this they got up. However, nearly twenty thousand persons remained there and agreed to accept the new creed; virtually, they accepted the agenda of the Guru and acceded to act up to its principles.

Guru Gobind Singh finding it meaningless and futile to argue any more with them, who were mentally very low, changed the topic of the discourse. He turned to the huge gathering of the followers to whom his only sight was life and his only word was law and in an impressive sermon prepared them for the coming struggle. The Guru told frankly but firmly the hill-*Rajas* that the time was approaching when the very low caste *Jats* and other down-troddens, whom they had discarded and also had harboured evil motives against the Guru, would protect their men and women from tyranny; rescue their temples and the breaking of their idols from the hands of Muslim oppressors. The Guru also told them that within a period of less than a century when the people of low-caste would rule the country. They (low-castes) would even employ them as their gatekeepers and '*ardalies*'. The Guru wanted that the people who had embraced Sikhism should also grasp Sikh-spirit otherwise they would resemble that donkey with the tiger skin. They might for some time cheat people and achieve temporary distinction; but their exposure was inevitable, sooner or later, and they would not fare better than the donkey with tiger's skin.

Let it be noticed that during that period too, there were many black-sheep in the fold. When the Guru was residing at Anandpur, a large number of followers were attracted from different areas to Anandpur. Those who were rich established '*Langars*' from where the needy as well as the poor could get meals. Thus the free distribution of food was regarded as an act of merit and those who performed it achieved popularity as well as name. Some of the Guru's courtiers and agents who preached religion and whose main task was to deal with the visitors in their respective areas regarded it incumbent on them to begin *langars* of their own. But most of what they did was only a show off. One day, at night the Guru in the disguise of a *Sadhu* went round the town and asked for food from all the *langars* but almost everywhere food was refused on the plea that the fresh food had been used up or finished. However, there was one Nand Chand who offered him fresh food. Some more like *Bhai* Nand Lal, Ram Kaur and *Bhai* Sahib Chand also provided him fresh food. The very next morning Guru Gobind Singh narrated his own experience of the night. He even showed the crumbs of bread which he received from some disciples. The people, particularly his own followers' exposure who pretended virtue had an effective imprint on the morals of the Sikhs.

3. Episodes of Significance

The popularity, teachings and even the name itself of the Tenth Master were a threat to the power of the hill-*rajas*. However, it was only felt by these rulers. Such rulers were yet to be born who would permit in their own areas the holding of conferences where people were taught to oppose the birth rights of the *Brahmans* and the princes and where the brotherhood of man was not merely taught but practised. To this may be added that the concept of common kitchen disturbed the hill *Rajput rajas* who to that day were very conservative in such matters. They would not allow men of lower castes to sit with them on the same couch. They held such practices as an attack on ancient customs, rites and usages. They considered this attack as the predecessor of the attack on their own authority also.

By the time, the hill-*rajas* became jealous and prejudiced of the Guru's position, the number of his disciples at Anandpur had increased significantly. Many of them had been attracted by their love for sport, while the others consisted of refugees who were made homeless as a consequence of Aurangzeb's policy of indifference and persecution. Guru Gobind Singh knew well that by providing shelter to such men he was giving the emperor a reason for provocation. Now, it was realised that it had become imperative to drill and train a large number of attendants that he then had and to continuously remain ready for an attack from outside. Hence, a small standing army was raised, and its maintenance in a state of efficiency necessitated the adoption of military forms and usages. Whenever, the Guru went for hunting the men of his corps also accompanied him. Jealousy and prejudice of the *raja* of Bilaspur - Bhim Chand was roused because of the beating of drums, the martial array and the soldierly bearing of the Guru's party; and it is an absolutely known fact that Anandpur was located in *raja* Bhim Chand's territory. Bhim Chand sent a word to the Guru to disband the corps and if the Guru didn't, then he would be turned out of his territory. This demand was also accompanied with a demand of *Pershadi*-the elephant which the Guru had got as a gift from the *raja* of Assam (Kamrup). But the Guru rejected his demand, Even so, the *raja* sent messenger after messenger to ask the Guru for the elephant; but as the gifts sent by the followers were inalienable so Guru Gobind Singh stuck to his earlier stand. At last, his family priest advised the *raja* to declare war against the Tenth Master.

Within no time, the news spread far and wide. The veterans in Guru's camp were happy on the advent of an opportunity to win fame and name in the battle field. However, there were persons who were used to spending lives on the offerings of other disciples. Being selfish and fearing that they could not survive if the Guru was defeated and driven out from Anandpur, they went and met his mother - *mata* Gujri and requested her to prevail upon the Guru to submit. So, the mother as well as the grand mother accordingly sent for him and in a very affectionate tone advised him to leave his active propaganda. He, too, was asked to lead the life of a religious man like most of his predecessors. He was also reminded that his grandfather, the sixth master, Guru Hargobind, who also indulged in such activities, had to leave Amritsar; if he also did not desist and followed the path of his grandfather then he would have to say good-bye to Anandpur, alongwith other members of his family.

Undoubtedly, Bhim Chand, the *raja* of Bilaspur who was acting as the head of all hill-*rajas* and virtually ruling over the Southern Himalayas, would be a very strong opponent. Moreover, there was fear and every possibility of the Mughal emperor's arriving to help the confederation of the hill-*rajas*. Thus, in such a situation it would be simply impossible for the Guru to hold his ground successfully. Of course, the Master heard them patiently, but with due respect, he replied to them (mother and grandmother) in a firm and decisive tone, that his mission did not, in any case, resemble that of his predecessors. He also explained that time had changed and along with it had changed their needs as well as the mission. His attempt was to infuse a fresh spirit into his disciples and followers which must enable them to oppose and finish wrongdoers. They were to hold their own against all possible opponents and foes. The Guru conveyed it to them in clear words. Instead of himself coming forward and taking the lead in the effort to afford such help to the week and the oppressed as was possible, Bhim Chand was placing all sort of difficulties and obstacles in the way of the Guru's noble task and also national uprising; for fear lest the reformers, if he succeeded, might turn their faces on his own principality. Jealous to the extreme, of a doubtful bent of mind and of wavering resolution, *raja* Bhim Chand was not a man to be trusted. Once, a trial of strength was to take place and the earlier it happened the better. The Guru, hence, was not ready to submit to the threats of the wily hill-*rajas*. War was, of course, avoided. The betrothal ceremony of Ajmere Chand, son of *raja* Bhim Chand, being at hand, it was considered inauspicious to start it with bloodshed.

Guru Gobind Singh's first wife - Jeeto Ji was not blessed with a child. As a consequence, he was married to Sundari Devi, in 1684 A.D., second time on the persuasion of his mother and grandmother. During this period, the Guru succeeded in solving a long standing territorial (relating to boundary) dispute between *Raja* Maidni Prakash of Nahan and *Raja* Fateh Shah of Srinagar in *Gharwal* region. This created a cordial relationship between the Guru and the two *Rajas* in question. As a result of this episode, Maidni Parkash offered Guru Gobind Singh a vast estate and became deeply attached to the Guru. The *Raja* even insisted on Guru's living there permanently. This offer was made so humbly and affectionately that the Guru could not reject this totally. Finally, the Guru agreed to reside in the territory of Nahan so long as the situation permitted. At last, in the month of *Magh* (February) the Guru laid down the foundations of the *Paunta* fortress at a very lovely and soothing spot on the bank of river *Jamuna*. The fortress was soon completed. A separate mansion was got built for the Master's residence; its remains even exist to this day. Guru Gobind Singh Ji lived here for some years. *Raja* Maidni Parkash and *Raja* Fateh Shah of Srinagar continuously visited the Guru at Paunta. Even they used to accompany the Guru to *Shikar* (hunting) parties as well.

On the contrary, Sodhi Ram Rai had settled himself in the region of *Raja* Fateh Shah. There he could make a large following. He took an active part in the proceedings that finally led to the death of two Gurus i.e. Guru Harkrishan and Guru Tegh Bahadur. On noticing the increase of the Guru's influence over Fateh Shah and fearing lest this should prove prejudicial to him he requested for reconciliation. In this effort he succeeded. At last, a meeting was arranged and Sodhi was pardoned. Assurance was given to him of future security and good relations.

At this time a muslim saint of Sadhaura, Budhu Shah was touring in the region. When he heard about the mission, pious ideas and the popularity of the Guru, he decided to pay him the reverence. So he came there for the purpose. The meeting between the two was friendly and cordial. This resulted in the establishment of life long friendly relations between them. During this time, the Mughal emperor dismissed 500 *Pathan* troopers. No Hindu or Muslim ruler dared to employ them. But on Budhu Shah's recommendation and out of sympathy with them the Guru took them into his service and gave a proof of his courage and boldness. Each *Pathan* soldier was paid one rupee a day where as their leaders such as *Sardars* Kale Khan, Bikhan Khan, Najabat Khan, Hayat Khan and Umar Khan were paid rupee five per day each.

Another worth mentioning aspect of the Guru's life is that he was a great patron of learning. He had a great liking for the study of Sanskrit. The Guru desired that his men must know all that was good in the *Shaastras*. He also employed learned *Pandits* and asked them to translate significant works into Vernacular. He also engaged one Raghunath *Brahman* to teach *Sanskrit* to his disciples and followers. But when Raghunath noticed that among the disciples several were carpenters, *Jats*, washermen and barbers he declined to teach them. He made it clear to the Guru that as per *shastras*, the *Sudras* who read and the Pandit who taught them *Sanskrit* were both guilty of a sin that needed pouring of molten lead into their ears. He, of course, admitted, though the *pandits* had since long lost their political importance and ascendancy and such punishment could not, therefore, be inflicted, but he was certain if he carried out Guru Gobind Singh's instructions he would incur mortal hatred of his caste people. The Guru removed the *pandit* at once and sent Karam Singh, Ganda Singh, Vir Singh, Saina Singh and Ram Singh, five promising youths to Benares to learn *Sanskrit*. After a few years they came back after acquiring competence and skill in Sanskrit lore. They did great service under the honoured titled of *Nirmalas* in awakening men's minds.

Sodhi Ram Rai passed away in 1685 A.D. and the news was brought to the Guru. In fact, Sodhi Ram Rai had earned enmity with some of the corrupt *masands*. Once when he was lost in deep meditation they regarded him dead and despite the opposition of Punjab Kaur - his wife, he was cremated alive. She wrote to the Guru telling him of the true version of the happening and also prayed that he should come and put matters right. The ugly behaviour of the *masands* enraged everybody especially the Guru, who at once left for Dehra Dun to condole his death and also to convey his sympathy to the widow. The Guru came back to Paunta. In response, to an invitation of Punjab Kaur the *masands* of the late Sodhi visited Dehra Dun, on the 17th day of

Sodhi's demise, to offer mourning gifts. On this occasion the Guru also, came along with *Diwan* Nand Chand, his cousins Mohri and Sango, uncle Kirpal Chand, Durga Ji, Jawahirji, Bhikhan Khan, Kale Khan and several other veterans. They were received with due respect by the lady. Next day, the *masands* were rebuked publicly for their high-handedness and misbehaviour. But not a word of repentance was uttered. Besides, he was confronted with the reply that as he himself was a guest he had no right to intervene in the affairs of others. The Guru remained calm finding that it was not the proper time to take any action in regard to the issue. Then '*Dastarbandi*' ceremony took place. The Guru gave a few presents consisting of garland of pearls, a bracelet of gold and a white shawl to Punjab Kaur. Many other relatives and friends also made appropriate gifts.

Now, all the *masands* gathered in a meeting the following day to receive *Khilats*. Punjab Kaur's agent Bhai Sunder asked them to shift to another room nearby, though sixty soldiers had already stationed at the gate of that room. As every *masand* entered he was subjected to a very searching examination. Those *masands* were released at once who were not found guilty. But the guilty were imprisoned in a room set apart for the purpose. Some of them were fined while others flogged; some were even put to death. The news of this exemplary event had a due effect. As a consequence, after this time the lady was not at all troubled by the *masands*.

After Some time when Guru Gobind Singh was at Paunta, the Guru's second wife Sundri was blessed with a son Ajit Singh. It was celebrated with rejoicings. Even from the fortresses of Nahan and Srinagar salutes were fired. Alms were distributed among the poor and gifts were given to needy persons. Followers from far and wide arrived and presented beautiful and costly presents including clothes and ornaments to the new born child, Ajit Singh.

4. Guru and The Hill-*Rajas*

As has already been narrated in the previous chapter, the daughter of *Raja* Fateh Shah was betrothed to Ajmere Chand, *Raja* Bhim Chand's son. Guru *Sahib* was invited to join the marriage ceremony at Srinagar. The Guru was also requested to bring all his attendants. But the Guru did not avail of the invitation. In fact, he had apprehensions that his splendour and following might add fuel to the fire of jealousy in Bhim Chand's heart. But, the Guru definitely wanted to convey that he valued the friendship of Fateh Shah; so he sent *Diwan* Nand Chand and *Prohit* Daya Ram along with 100 *swars* (troops) to present *tambol* which consisted of gifts. The marriage came off with great success.

At the time of receiving *tambol*, the gifts sent by the Tenth Master were announced amongst others. No friend of *Raja* Fateh Shah including the hill *Rajas* present, had given him *tambol* of such value. As a result, the announcement of the Guru's gifts enraged them; especially Bhim Chand of Bilaspur. *Raja* Kirpal Chand Katochia and *Raja* Bir Sen of Mandi, at heart inimical to Bhim Chand provoked the latter still more. Now, Bhim Chand cautioned Fateh Shah about his relations with the Guru. He even threatened him with the severance of the newly contracted tie if he continued to have any friendly relations with the Guru. However, Fateh Shah protested in the beginning; but when the enraged *Raja* Bhim Chand virtually carried out his threat and left Srinagar with his son, leaving the bride behind, he gave away. After this, it was agreed upon that the presents sent by the Guru be looted and not a man be left alive to take the news to the Guru. Taking note of the change in Fateh Shah's behaviour and conduct, *Diwan* Nand Chand and all his attendants immediately drew their swords and fought their way back to *Paunta*. A detailed report was submitted to the Guru that Bhim Chand and other *Rajas* were about to attack *Paunta*. At once ammunition was given to the men; even the fortress was placed in a state of defence.

When a small band of the Guru's men escaped safely; Bhim Chand collected all the hill-*rajas*. He appealed to them in a provocative speech to assist him in either killing the Guru or sending him in Aurangzeb's custody who would deal with him the way he had done with the ninth Guru - his father. His appeal really worked and nearly all the hill chiefs joined hands against the Guru. They put their armies in action amidst the beats of drums and the shouts of the populace. On the other hand, on Guru's side Mohri Chand, Gulab Rai, Sahib Chand, Hari Chand, Kirpal Chand, Prohit Daya Ram, Jaita, Rana Sanga, Jowahirji, Udaiji and many other veterans advanced to face the *Rajas*. Let it be noticed that the *Rajas* had also bribed the *Pathans*, whom the Guru had employed on Budhu Shah's recommendation, and they deceived the Guru a few hours before the start of the battle while crossing over to the enemy side. Only Kale Khan and his 100 men proved loyal. Five to six hundred *Udasi Sadhus*, who had been living on the bounty of the Guru, fearing lest they too should be called upon to fight, took benefit of the night and fled. Only Kirpal Dass refused to accompany the fugitives and remained behind to live and die with the Guru.

The *Rajas* and their advisers were under the impression that when the *Pathans* had left the Guru, Gobind Singh would have no fighting troops left. However, they were fully mistaken in their calculations. The downtrodden, unwarlike men who had been hitherto looked upon with contempt and who had never been heard of in Indian history of warfare proved more than a match for the *Rajputs* and *Pathans* combined, the Guru had absolute faith in his men. The Guru left Paunta to the care of Mehra and Kula and he himself marched out at the head of a small army of his devoted followers to give fight to the enemy. This time, his uncle Kirpal Chand, Sahib Chand, Lal Chand (son of Bidhi Chand) who had displayed his worth during the life time of the 6th Master which gave him a name and fame in Sikh history, *Diwan* Nand Chand, Lal Chand, Udai Singh, Bachittar Singh, Alam Singh and Chandan Rai accompanied the Guru, simply because of their dedication to him as well as to the Guru's mission.

The Guru alongwith his small army and a few veterans reached the field of Bhangani. It is a very small village nearly eight miles from Paunta. He could notice from there the large armies of the hill-*rajas* and the contingent of the *Pathans* coming down rapidly. A halt was at once ordered, Sango Shah, a commandant advanced with half of the Guru's forces, the remaining half being kept in reserve. The armies of the hill-*rajas*, thereupon, fired volleys of bullets and the battle followed. Sango Shah stationed his men in a narrow but deep valley which served as a rampart. A strong wind blowing enhanced the swiftness of the arrows shot by the Sikhs which gave an impression that even the elements were partial to the Guru.

When the three Hill-*Rajas* - Bhim Chand, Fateh Shah and Hari Chand reached close enough, the Sikh bullets slew nearly a thousand men and repulsed the enemy. Kesri Singh, who was Bhim Chand's brother-in-law seeing this came to their help. The faithless *Pathans*, who had deceived the Guru, attracted by the hope of loot anxiously came forward. But their advance and progress was halted by the bullets and arrows of the Sikhs. Meanwhile reinforcement of 500 horsemen under *Prohit* Daya Ram and *Diwan* Nanak Chand arrived to assist the Sikhs. As a result, the Sikhs pierced the breasts of the hillmen by their shots and arrows and laid hundreds of them prostrate. When the battle was raging furiously, Budhu Shah with his four sons, two brothers and nearly a thousand followers arrived to teach the *Pathans* a lesson for their treachery who had been employed only on his recommendation, and also fell upon a section of the *Rajput* army. His loyalty and sacrifice made the Guru happy. Kale Khan, with his hundred men, was sent to help Budhu Shah. The battle was fought at three places which divided the enemy strength. At this very time, the Guru's wrestler - Lal Chand Mahi, feeling a strong impulse ran his horse into the thick of the battle where Sango Shah along with his brothers was resisting the enemy. Though he was fully unaware of the war tactics, his dagger killed many and when at last he fell the air resounded with cries of bravo! bravo! and bravo! from all directions. His example was followed by Lal Chand. He was a confectioner, who had never handled a weapon. Bowing to the Guru, having sword and shield in his hands, he joined *Diwan* Nand Chand, *Prohit* Daya Ram and others. He could spread terror in the ranks of the *Pathan* traitors and died fighting boldly. Next to him it was Mohri who rushed into the ranks of the Afghans. He killed many but was soon besieged by the enemy and was wounded seriously. Chandan Rai and Sango Ram along with 50 troops reached there to help Mohri. They could rescue him and after doing so they fought bravely and courageously on the side of Sango Shah. On the other hand, Budhu Shah had been performing bold and great deeds. Though his several followers along with his two sons were killed in the battle field, he himself was inflicting heavy losses on the enemy. Very soon Kirpal Chand, Guru's uncle came and joined him. From their arrows death rained on the invading army. Now, foe's detachment directed their arrows to precisely that spot where Guru Gobind Singh was sitting and noticing the progress of the fight. However, it was repulsed by the anger of the missiles thrown from there. At this time Bhim Chand and other *Rajput Rajas* taunted Hayat Khan and other *Pathans* about their war-skill, courage and bravery. As a consequence, they fell upon the main line of the Sikhs. Within no time, the cries of *Ali*! *Ali* and *Ali* were heard. At once, the *Rajput* army joined in the fight. Bullets and arrows poured down in heavy number. A large number of men as well as horses fell. Many *Rajput* chiefs were killed. Noticing that the Afghans were advancing from a flank, *Udasi* Kirpal Dass, taking hold of mace, struck it with full might on Hayat's head. His skull was broken and brain scattered. Even his associate Najabat Khan was about to eliminate the *Sadhu* when *Diwan* Nand Chand struck the *Pathan* with a spear.

However, the wound inflicted was not deep. He soon recovered. Besides, recovering from the shock Najabat Khan alongwith Bhikhan Khan attacked *Diwan* Nand Chand. But, Kirpal Chand together with Lal Chand, Sahib Chand, Ganga Ram and *Prohit* Daya Ram came to Nand Chand's rescue and were engaged with the Afghans. They were about to put them to fight when *Raja* of Chanderi - Ghazi Chand arrived and attacked the Sikhs from behind; and so courageously and ably they fought that the Sikhs would have been forced to leave the field and retire, had not Udai Singh, Bachittar Singh and several other *Rajput* refugees arrived to help them and turned the tide of the war. Finally the army of the combined *Rajas* fell back, though many *Rajas* like Hari Chand, Gopal Chand and Kesri Singh fought bravely and courageously. The brave and bold Ghazi Chand, true to the name he bore and Najabat Khan who was not able to tolerate the shock of the defeat, attacked with full might. Sango Shah - the Sikh commander, was killed in hand to hand fight with Khan.

The death of Sango Shah and Mohri didn't dishearten the Sikhs instead they felt inspired with the courage born of despair. Now, they acted swiftly and death began to rain from their arrows. Several Afghans fell dead. Even their leader Bhikhan was wounded. So he fled from the field. As a result, confusion in the ranks of the hill forces was created. Hari Chand after recovering from his wounds again was seen on the scene. He slayed Jit Mal and inflicted several wounds on Guru Gobind Singh. But soon the Guru's arrow pierced him and he fell down. But his friend *Raja* of Srinagar fought like a lion to wreak vengeance on the Sikhs. The victory would have been theirs, but in the mean time the arrival of two wooden batteries that had been made by one Sikh carpenter Rama, made the Sikhs strong. The situation completely changed and a large number of the enemy soldiers were killed. Confusion spread in the enemy camp. They began to flee in all directions. The Sikhs who were victorious chased the flying Afghans and put them and the hill-men to the sword, looted their ammunition and provision stores. After this they returned to their camps, of course, singing the glory of the Almighty with whose blessings they had got victory. On their return to *Paunta* rejoicings took place and the victory was celebrated with grace and joy.

The battle of Bhangani was the first one in Guru's career, and it was the first win of the Guru. It completely changed the character of the Sikhs. Now, they became war loving. Many of his brave disciples and personal friends were killed in this very battle. However this didn't dispirit the Guru as well as his followers. Guru Gobind Singh rewarded Kirpal, who had fought with courage, and Budhu Shah whose two sons, one brother and a hundred of followers had died fighting in the war. In reward both of them received Guru's turbans. These were a token of everlasting friendship. Soon after the battle of Bhangani, Guru Gobind Singh departed from Paunta. It was *Raja* Maidni Parkash who was loyal throughout to the Guru, who presented him with costly presents at the time of his departure. On his way back, the Guru stayed for a week at Lohgarh. From this very fort, the bold Banda fought against the Mughal forces for years. Hence, stopping at different places on his way and spreading his teachings, ideals and the light of his beliefs, he arrived at Anandpur. Here the Guru was accorded a warm welcome.

Guru Gobind Singh was away from Anandpur for a span of four years and during this period, Aurangzeb's tyranny as well as bigotry continued relentlessly against the warnings he had been receiving from different parts of his empire. However, the emperor was furious. His atrocities incited serious and mighty discontent in the Punjab. The Guru was, undoubtedly the Lord (Spiritual head) of the Sikhs and the Hindus who considered him as *Sacha Padshah*. In fact, he was an emblem of the Divine Being Himself. It was obvious that the people would approach him with their problems. Their tales of woe and wrongs, the soulless indifference of the extremely immoral Muslim officers added to the troubles of the Hindus. The reduction of the dignified Hindus into slavery, the forcible removal of the Hindu virgins into the *harem* of the Muslim gentry and nobility hurt the Guru deeply. The Guru felt convinced that the Mughal oppressors had exhausted human tolerance and the time had come for the adoption of some scheme of retribution. He, therefore, employed all the might of his eloquence in telling the people that they should no longer meekly submit to Mughal tyranny. Now, it was time, to resist and they should not sit idle till they taught a lesson to their oppressors. The imprint of the Guru's teachings awakened and inspired the people of North-Western India. In other regions of the country also, the information of the movement started by the Guru, inspired and thrilled the people, particularly the Hindus with boldness and courage in their struggle for liberation.

In order to prepare and organise contingencies for future, he setup a factory at Anandpur for producing weapons like guns, swords, ammunition and other equipment of war. Of course, the Guru was receiving weapons of the best steel and finest make from the disciples of the Northwest region. In fact, they too belonged to warlike tribes. However, the number of weapons he received was not sufficient. Moreover, he did not like to depend for war material on this source alone.

At this crucial time, *mata* Nanaki, who had played most significant role in transforming the character and life of her illustrious son - Tegh Bahadur, and still more illustrious grandson, Gobind Singh, passed away. It was a personal loss to the Tenth Master. Besides, after the battle of Bhangani, the hill-*Rajas* felt convinced that they would not be able to crush the Guru. Consequently, they decided to win over him with favours. So, nearly all the *Rajas* led by *Raja* Bhim Chand along with his minister Parma Nand visited the Guru and asked for forgiveness for their past misconduct and wrong deeds. Guru Gobind Singh accused him of waging a war and killing so many brave men. But the Guru, realising the futility of the war, forgave the *Raja* and his associates.

Now, the Guru got built four fortresses, named *Anand Garh, Loh Garh, Fateh Garh and Kes Garh,* during 1688-89 A.D. All these forts were located in the vicinity of Anandpur. During the course of his war career, the fort of Anandpur proved most useful and serviceable especially during the attack of Anandpur by the imperial forces.

To test the loyalty and perserverance of his followers and disciples, Guru Gobind Singh once asked them not to leave Anandpur without his consent. All the gates were guarded to prevent their exit. Several who were proud of their loyalty to the Guru, were the first to grow impatient for seeing the world outside. Even a week did not pass when they began to follow anxious plans for leaving the fortress. One scheme was especially very simple and ingenious. A man was made to pretend dead. He was kept on a bier and taken to the cremation ground for the last rites. The bier was accompanied by a regular crowd. When this procession passed out of the town, of course, singing funeral songs, the Guru who had somehow divined the secret ordered the procession party to stop. The so called dead body was placed on a funeral pyre and when preparations to cremate it were going on the man who pretended to be dead threw off funeral attire and fled to the forest to the confusion of the crowd which also resorted to the fraudulent practice and to the surprise and laughter of the beholders. Hence, antisocial elements were greatly embarrassed. The episode also established that the Tenth Master would divine the secrets of human-hearts. And, It was really not possible to keep him in dark.

Let it be noticed that the Mughal emperor.-Aurangzeb was busy in crushing revolts and disturbances in the South. Even reinforcement was despatched from the Punjab. As a consequence, military strength of this province was considerably weakened. Land revenue and other taxes too fell into arrears. There was no one who could dare collect tribute from the rulers of hill-states. When the Punjab Governor was asked to deposit a few crores of rupees in the royal treasury, he expressed his inability to do so. This excited the wrath of Aurangzeb. Now, commandant Miyan Khan was despatched to use force and get the money. No sooner did he arrive at Lahore, than he started proceedings against the hill-*Rajas*, West of Ravi. He sent Alif Khan, his nephew against Kirpal Chand, *Raja* of Kangra as well as the other adjoining Hill-*Rajas*. Now, the tribute was paid by Kirpal Chand and Dyal Chand. Alif Khan was told by them that the realization of the tribute from all the hill-*Rajas* would be comparatively easy if their leader Bhim Chand was forced to respect the power of the royal force. The suggestion was carried out and a punitive force marched against Bilaspur. This force was ordered to halt at Nadaon plain. From there an agent was sent to Bhim Chand to tell him that if he didn't pay three years' tribute soon he would be imprisoned and his territory plundered. But this threat proved in vain. The *Raja* was enraged on hearing that it was at the provocation of his foe Kirpal Chand that the expedition was approaching him. A war council was held in all haste and it was collectively resolved that the advancing Mughals must be opposed and stopped.

Consequently, the allied hill-*Rajas* came with their respective forces and the war started. The *Rajputs* fought bravely but they felt that they could not continue the fight against so mighty an enemy. At night they assembled and decided to approach the Guru for help. Immediately they sent an embassy to the Guru at Anandpur. At the very out set, the Guru was reluctant to join them because he held them treacherous. However, Parma Nand - the *Wazir* of Bilaspur fell at the Guru's feet and the Guru himself realising that the time was not far away when he was to oppose and fight the Mughals, decided in favour of joining them and the Guru, at once, ordered Nand Chand to take 500 chosen men and reach the spot of the fight. The Guru himself reached Nadaon with a good number of men before it was dawn. The arrival of the Sikh forces strengthened and encouraged the failing hearts of the hill-armies. At noon the fight again started. The arrows of the Sikhs created havoc in the ranks of the Mughal army. In this fight Alif Khan's ally *Raja* Daya Chand was killed by an arrow shot by the Guru himself. When his ally Kirpal Chand was injured as well, the Muslim forces lost heart and retreated under cover of darkness. Now, the hill *Rajas*, led by Bhim Chand of Bilaspur, expressed their gratitude to Guru Gobind Singh. They also requested and pressed the Guru to remain with them and enjoy their hospitality.

However, very shortly it came to the notice of the Guru that Bhim Chand had made a secret private treaty with Alif Khan by virtue of which he was permitted to pay tribute from the *Rajas* of the newly formed confederation in such a manner as might seem proper to him. The moment it came into the notice of the *Rajputs*, they were alarmed as well as astonished. The Guru also took offence and at once departed for Bilaspur in sheer disgust. At this *Raja* Bhim Chand tried to appease him by offering some costly presents to the Sikh soldiers but the Guru told Bhim Chand frankly that he could not trust men who were treacherous and worshipped stocks and stones and even their hearts were dead, as they did not have the feelings of dignity and self-respect.

When the Sikh troops were returning, on the way back near village Alsoon they were opposed by the *Rajputs*. They were the clansmen of Bhim Chand of Bilaspur. Earlier too these people had looted and slayed the Sikh pilgrims. Now the Sikhs attacked the villagers. With the exception of old men, women and children, all of them, who resisted their advance, were killed. Thus after removing these high way robbers, the Sikhs advanced forward. The whole hill population was inspired by Alsoon *Rajputs*' treatment, with a feeling of respect for the Sikhs. They did not face any difficulty on their way till they reached Anandpur.

The Guru's wife Jeeto had no child till now. She had many times requested and prayed to the Guru for being blessed with a son but she always got the reply that such a blessing was not in his power to grant. Besides, she had been continuously watching people coming to him and being blessed which definitely resulted in the fulfilment of their desires. She failed to follow her husband's refusal to her repeated prayers. At last she collected courage and asked the Guru for an explanation. Now, the Guru categorically asked her if she recalled what he invariably used to tell all who visited him with some desire or other. "Yes" was the answer." Do thou like wise", said the Guru, "and the timeless one shall grant the prayer." Consequently, she obeyed the command with due respect. Now the Guru saw her daily washing the feet of the *Sadh Sangat* at Anandpur. She too was seen serving in the cooking and the dining rooms. Though, the Guru's disciples and followers didn't like her doing these small activities but none could dare to ask her not to perform such works. Her services had, at last, the desired effect. All the Sikh devotees, without any exception, filled with emotion fervently wished her divine choice blessings. Their prayer was heard and she was blessed with a son on the 21st of *Chet Samvat Vikrimi* 1747 which means 1690 A.D. The child was named Jujjhar Singh, who received martyrdom in the battle of Chamkaur.

The help that Guru Gobind Singh had given to *Raja* Bhim Chand of Bilaspur and his allies and which had resulted into the defeat of Alif Khan, enraged Dilawar Khan, the *Subedar* of Lahore. Not many months had lapsed before an attack was organised and despatched against the Guru. This campaign was led by Rustam Khan - son of the *Subah* of Lahore. The army of this campaign encamped in the bed of a hill torrent near Anandpur at nightfall. The Guru got the news on time. So he ordered an advance against the enemy. With in no time, arrows flew into the ranks of the enemy. It gave an impression that the Sikh assailants were in large numbers. Even nature sided with the Sikhs, as the rain fell in torrents and waters of the hill stream swept off great many Muslim troops and forced the rest to flee for their lives.

Hence, the routed army came back to Lahore to the great astonishment of the Lahore *Subah*. He was highly enraged and was filled with a desire to wreak vengeance on the man who had authored so much disgrace as well as dishonour to him. He had an adopted son named Hussaini, who was a violent and cruel man. Now, he was appointed to lead the Muslim forces against the Sikhs under the Tenth Master. So, one more expedition was sent against the Guru. Husaini was accompanied by a few capable military leaders like Alif Khan, Kripa Ram, Chandan Singh, and *Raja* of Nurpur. On his way to Anandpur, he looted Amarkot, subdued the Dhadwals and ravaged the Dun. He also killed many other hill chieftains of repute and devastated their soils. The news of his high-handedness and cruel deeds spread far and wide. Even *Raja* of Bilaspur and his ally Kirpal Chand Katochia joined hands with Husaini and lent their services for the subjugation of Anandpur and the capture of the Guru, though Guru Gobind Singh had recently helped them against the Muslim forces on their request. The Guru was informed about their treacherous conduct and plan. The Guru, at once, issued orders that Anandpur be placed in a state of defence.

Diwan Nand Chand was appointed the commander of the garrison. The information of the expected attack filled the minds of many an easy going Sikhs with horror. Unaware of and unused to the difficulties of the war and habitual to a life of comfort; they noticed in these Muslim expeditions the approaching decline of the time honoured structure that the previous Gurus had raised. They met the Guru's mother, and asked her to convince the Guru to make peace with Hussaini on any terms, but in vain. The Guru refused to listen to such an insulting proposal. The Guru made it clear that he was sent by the Lord to crush atrocities of the ruling class. To submit to their authority and will was next to impossible.

In the mean time Hussaini was marching, without halt to Anandpur. Gopal Chand, the *Raja* of Guler, being afraid of the atrocities of the cruel invader, met him on the way and also offered a part of the tribute. However, Kirpal Chand and Bhim Chand advised Hussaini to arrest Gopal Chand and ask for the whole amount due. Gopal Chand managed to escape and shut himself up in the forest of Guler together with his companion *Raja* Ram Singh. Now, the fort of Guler was besieged by Hussaini. Hard hit by the shortage of provisions of both men and ammunition, Gopal sent his *wazir* to Hussaini requesting for peace. Hussaini demanded ten thousand rupees. Sangtia Singh along with other six prominent *Sardars* and a few hundred men, was sent to bring the *Raja*. It was not only assured, instead promise was made that the *Raja* would not be harmed. So Gopal Chand arrived; but no agreement could be arrived at. Kirpal Chand Katochia forgetting his obligation suggested his capture or murder. But the effort failed. Suspecting the sinister design of his foe, Gopal Chand at once escaped.

Now, a furious battle was raged. Both the sides met heavy loss of life. Kirpal Singh and Sangtia Singh were also killed; the loss of the

Muslims was equally great. Even Bhim Chand had to retire to some safe place. Husaini who was proud of his valour and ability was killed too. Gopal won the battle. This way, the second attempt to conquer Anandpur came to an end.

However, the Muslims didn't sit idle. They began to plan another attack on Anandpur. Again, Dilawar Khan sent Shaur Khan with a huge army against the Guru. But this expedition was opposed by the *Raja* of Jaswal. Now, a pitched battle was fought in his territory. This battle proved decisive. Jhujhar Singh and Narain Chand, both *Rajput* warriors were commanding the Muslim forces. They fell fighting boldly, soon the Muslim forces lost courage and completely felt dispirited. Now, under the pretext of illness they returned to Lahore.

When the news of another defeat of the imperial forces reached the Mughal emperor, he was enraged. As a result, in 1701 A.D., Aurangzeb appointed Prince Muazzam, his eldest son, the head of a larger army and ordered him to proceed against the enemies. He left for Lahore and sent his agents to collect the tributes. He asked these agents to punish the *Rajas* who did not make payment of all the arrears at once. They succeeded everywhere in their mission. The Mughal agent, who was sent to Anandpur, was highly impressed by the benevolent manner in which the needy and poor were fed and looked after. He found no fault with the Guru's house. He was moved to such an extent that he took upon himself the task of punishing the hill-*Rajas* who had been troubling the Tenth Master without any cause. As a consequence, many were taken to task and very few of them could escape disgraceful treatment at the hands of the Mughal army.

The special treatment to the Guru enraged the hill-*Rajas* who immediately formed a deputation under the leadership of Ajmer Chand of Bilaspur. It went to meet the Lahore Governor and made complaint that the Guru had collected and stored huge quantities of ammunition. They also conveyed that the Guru had with him a large number of brave men as well as a large treasury to which all his followers contributed one-tenth of their earnings. He was spending his resources as well as energies on converting his disciples and followers into a militant force. And, this was the only reason that there was unrest and lawlessness in all those areas where the Sikhs lived. If, immediate steps were not taken to crush the rising power of the Sikhs, they would be encouraged to measure swords with the Mughal authority. Let it be noticed that the *Subedar* of Lahore was already enraged and prejudiced against the Tenth Master. It was, therefore, not very difficult to convince him to this belief that the rising power of the Guru was really a threat to the imperial authority. As a consequence, the *Subah* of Lahore sent sufficient forces against the Guru as he had earlier done in the battles of Nadaon and Guler. He also ordered his forces to realise ten thousand rupees from the Guru as well. If the Guru refused to pay he should be taken into custody and brought to Lahore. With these orders, *Subah's* son along with Naib Nazim, Dalal Khan attacked Anandpur. Of course, the Sikhs bravely opposed them, but the invaders succeeded in entering this town, slayed a large number of inhabitants of this town. Also, they took away all they could lay their hands on. They stopped at Bhalon village, nearly eight miles from the town of Anandpur.

Now, till late in the night, they rejoiced. When they lay drunk, the Sikhs attacked them. Their attack was so swift that there spread panic in the whole Muslim camp. In fact, there was great confusion in the invading force because of the dense darkness of the night and the dismay caused by this sudden attack. Even friends struck friends and a large number of them fled for their lives. Within a very brief time not a soul remained there, though they had fought very boldly and bravely hardly a few hours earlier. Huge ammunition and stores of the enemy also fell in the hands of the Sikhs. It counterbalanced the previous loss of the Sikhs.

Soon after, another attack was planned and organised against the Tenth Master. However, through the influence and intervention of *Bhai* Nand Lal and *Diwan* Hakim Rai of Agra Prince Muazzam left the idea of sending any more expeditions against the Guru. It is noteworthy to state that Muazzam had ambitions of his own. Though he was the eldest son of the Mughal Emperor as well as a righteous clamant to the Mughal throne, he was aware of the fact that when his father died, he would have to fight for the throne, as there was no law of succession. Moreover, it was also traditional practice of the royal family. Thus, it was in his interest to secure as many supporters as he could obtain. Keeping this in mind, he despatched *Diwan* Nand Lal to Anandpur requesting for the Guru's assistance - both spiritual as well as temporal. The request was accepted and Guru Gobind Singh assured *Diwan* Nand Lal that with the blessings and grace of the Almighty Prince Muazzam would be installed on the throne. So, the prince was pleased at Nand Lal's success. Nand Lal was rewarded and honoured with befitting honours.

Now, peace reigned in the Northern Punjab due to Muazzam's intervention and the Guru could take up with the preaching of spiritual and secular knowledge as well as ideals. The disciples and followers, who came from different and distant places to obtain the solace of religion in Guru's *darbar*, were illumined and awakened by the poets and *Pandits* in his (Guru's) employ. Another significant point worth stating is that it was a period of chaos and confusion. Life and belongings of the visitors/pilgrims at Anandpur were not safe; instead they were always in danger. But despite these troubles they continued to visit Anandpur in sufficient numbers to pay their reverence to the Tenth Master. In short, the state of affairs became intolerable. Moreover, when the *Ranghars* of Bajrur - a clan of fierce Muslims, made it their regular profession to plunder the Sikhs, a Sikh force besieged their village. Though the *Ranghars* fought for some time, but finally they gave way and fled. The village was now looted. Much of the looted property of the Sikh pilgrims was restored to their actual owners.

Besides, the conservative people of the hill-states never forgot and forgave the Sikhs for their new and novel beliefs and ways. They gave the Sikhs no end of annoyance. The Sikhs did not get required produce or crop from the land attached to Anandpur. As a result they were forced to go to the forests and neighbouring villages to procure grass and fuel as well as purchase provisions; but they were generally troubled by the villagers. So, under these situations they (the Sikhs) were forced to keep force. This resulted in constant conflicts between the Sikhs and the hill-men. The hill chiefs always sided with their clansmen and instead of exercising their influence in favour of peace and facilitating the purchase of supplies they invariably resorted to menaces and threats which made matters still worse. The Sikhs also hated the hill-*Rajas* because of two factors: (a) many small acts of persecution on the part of hill-men; and (b) the hill-*Rajas* had many a time borrowed forces from Muslims to remove and eliminate the Sikhs. The feelings between the two sides were so high that the Guru, while on a hunting expedition, along with a band of his disciples, was waylaid by the *Raja* of Bilaspur. He was lying in ambush with sufficient force. To the surprise of the Sikhs and their Guru, the hill forces attacked them without any provocation. However, the Sikhs resisted and repulsed this attack of *Raja* Bhim Chand. They inflicted heavy losses on the assailants. When the other hill-chiefs heard of this, they held a council and there it was decided to turn out the Guru from Anandpur with the help of the Mughal power. At once, a man was despatched to Sirhind to convey the Suba of this place that Guru Gobind Singh had organised a force with the intention to wreak vengeance on the Muslims. He had spread lawlessness, confusion and anarchy in their regions.

Their lives and property were unsafe, and in danger. All their provisions were being plundered and soil laid waste.

At this time Mughal emperor Aurangzeb was busy in the Deccan expedition. When he received the information about the Sikhs' activities, he sent orders for the suppression of their rising power. Adina Beg accompanied by a brave *Pathan* Painda Khan started against the Guru on the head of a large army of ten thousand men. *Raja* Bhim Chand also reached with his army to assist the Mughal commander. When the forces of the allies approached, the drum was beaten. The Sikh army at once prepared themselves for war. A battle was fought at which Painda Khan fell in a hand to hand fight with the Guru. Ajit Singh showed valour and his fighting ability while committing tremendous slaughter in the ranks and files of the hill men. He routed them completely. Even Adina Beg found himself in tight position. He thought it prudent to retreat and return to Sirhind. But the hill-*Rajas* didn't feel disheartened. They again met at Bilaspur where they resolved to make a fresh attempt to suppress the Sikhs. This time a renowned warrior Azmatullah, a *Gujjars'* leader came to the help of the hill-chiefs. He was living in that very region. On the other hand the Sikhs led by the Guru were reinforced and strengthened when armed Sikhs from *Majha*, *Malwa* and the North-West Punjab reached Anandpur. Now, three forts i.e. Fatehgarh, Lohgarh and Anandgarh were garrisoned. Daya Nand was assigned the charge of *Majha* Sikhs, whereas the Sikhs from *Malwa* were put under the command of Prince Ajit Singh.

The hill-*Rajas* held a meeting at night. There they decided to blockade Anandpur with an objective to starve the Sikhs and hence compelled them to yield. The Guru, somehow, got the clue about their intention and plan. When next day early at day break the *Rajputs* besieged Anandpur, they started pitching their tents but the bullets and arrows of the Sikhs forced them to retreat. At this very stage Prince Ajit Singh ordered his men to attack the retreating *Rajputs* and killed a good number of them. The news was sent to the Guru who blessed Ajit Singh and other officers, who had accompanied him and maintained the dignity of the Sikh community.

Now the *Rajas* once again met at night at supper. Kesari Singh Jaswalia in order to encourage and raise the spirits of his associates, offered to lead his mad elephant against Guru Gobind Singh and bring him as a prisoner. At this time the *Rajas* were in a frame of mind in which any thing which could give a ray of hope was of great relief. Kesari Singh was a braggart. The moment his motive was expressed it became known throughout the Sikh camp. Guru Gobind Singh asked Duni Chand, who was leading the *Majha* contingent to go, face and kill the elephant. But he fled away during the night. It is believed that he died of snakebite on his way home. And, next morning Kesari Singh alongwith his men and also the elephant marched against the Tenth Master. The moment the elephant reached near enough, Bachitar Singh, a *Rajput* rode towards him. He thrust his spear into the elephant's forehead and pierced it through. The wounded elephant became brute and then shot back into the *Rajput* contingent and trampled hundreds under his feet. Now, *Raja* Kesari Singh moved arrogantly, right and left. But he was attacked by Udai Singh. He was thrown off his horse; his head too was cut off. Udai Singh lifted it on one end of his spear and brought it victoriously to his camp.

The death of *Raja* Kesari Singh enraged the hill-*Rajas*. As a consequence, during the battle of the following day they fought with valour and full force. The Sikhs had to retreat to their forts twice. However, the blockading army was not considerably strong to turn out the Sikhs from their sheltering places. This time the battle continued for weeks but no possibility of the Sikhs giving way was visible. On the suggestion of a priest: Pamma, a cow was stationed near the main gate of the town; and the Guru was told that the hill-chiefs had made a mistake in starting war against him. They should have gone back to their respective states long ago; but they feared lest this act of their might be interpreted as cowardice on their part. They were fully humble to the Guru and as such besought him to protect their honour. If the Guru left Anandpur for a day, they would lift the blockade and retire at once. After the lapse of this period the Guru might return and re-occupy the town of Anandpur. Their plan for gaining an advantage was successful. The Guru accepted their request and vacated Anandpur.

Now, the Sikhs encamped at Nirmohgarh, a couple of miles away. As it had been expected, in stead of retiring the hill-chiefs attacked the Sikhs. This time, the Sikhs were exposed on all sides. The enemy even directed a common cannon ball against the Tenth Master but the Guru could not be harmed; instead Ram Singh was killed. Besides, the Guru's missiles killed a large number of the assailants. When the hill *Rajas* noticed that the Sikhs were invincible even in the open field, they retreated. In the meanwhile, these chiefs approached the *Subah* of Sirhind - Wazir Khan for help who gladly brought reinforcements. As a result, the hill *Rajas* were strengthened. They again fell upon the Sikhs. However, the Sikhs under Ajit Singh made it difficult for the allied forces to turn them out from their position. We come to know from the Sikh chronicles that Wazir Khan, noticing that the Guru's men were a formidable enemy to be tackled, proposed to the Guru through the *Raja* of Basoli that in case the Guru left for the latter's state the siege would be lifted. The Guru was persuaded by his counsels acceded to the request. The reality, however, appears to be that when, a few days after, the Sikhs suffered a reverse. The Guru retreated to Basoli in the region of friendly *Raja* in the near by vicinity of Anandpur and took refuge in the fort there. Now, the invading troops did not regard it useful to follow him. Here, he halted for some time. There he resumed his job of preaching and peace.

Raja Dharampal of Basoli had become a true devotee of Guru Gobind Singh. He served the Guru with all his resources and remained in constant attendance on him. At last, the time came when the Guru had to leave Basoli. He left the place in order to re-occupy Anandpur. After acknowledging the services of *Raja* Dharampal and blessing him with a promise of undying friendship, the Guru left Basoli for Anandpur. On his way back, he halted at Bhambaur because the Chief of this place had become acquainted with the Guru. There, he stayed for some time and through out remained busy in spreading his doctrines and ideals. People from far and near started visiting him. They also brought with them whatever they could and presented the Guru. Once, some of them were way laid and looted by the rogues of a village - Kalmot. When the news reached the Guru he despatched a band of Sikh soldiers. They were asked to punish the ruffians and recover the looted property. This was at once done. After this, the episode of the Sikhs were never troubled by these people. After this disciples began to reach and reside there. On the other hand, the retreating hill *Rajas* and Muslims had not forgotten to demolish its fortification and destroy its significant edifices.

One day Jog Singh, a very sincere devotee of the Guru, the latter naturally favoured him most, went out alone. He was stopped on the way and assaulted by some persons who were jealous of his place and position in the eyes of the Guru. He bore the treatment with forbearance. He didn't say any word about the happening to any one. When Guru Gobind Singh, some how, came to know about it, he sent for Jog Singh. He also asked him why he had not reported the incident. But he quietly answered that nothing special had happened which was to be reported to him. He also told that the Tenth Master alone was the subject of his thought and the actions and such acts of other people didn't disturb and absorb his mind. This show of self-denial highly impressed and pleased the Guru as well as those followers and disciples who were present there. In fact, it was the impact of Guru's teachings and personality due to which the people who lived there had become highly humble and they too had been released from the spiritual and political bondage.

During this period the hill-chiefs were at peace with the Sikhs. They learnt from their past experience to respect the Guru's authority. Their envoys at the court of the Tenth Master, specially Pamma made all the efforts to keep the Sikhs in humour. During this period of peace and friendship, Guru Gobind Singh was requested to visit Rawalsar - a sacred lake in Suket State. The Guru went to this place on the *'Ikadasi'* day. Already many hill-*Rajas* had reached that place of pilgrimage. Here, Guru Gobind Singh addressed and reminded them of their miserable condition. He also told them about the means for their amelioration. His address was so effective that several of these Chiefs offered to receive the Sikh baptism. However, it could not materialise as their one *Brahman* adviser dissuaded them from embracing Sikhism. Thus a formation of a coalition, which would have sufficiently facilitated the works of India's regeneration, was prevented. It is really astonishing to note that a large and effective section of the very society in whose interests the Guru had formulated this great scheme was opposed to it from its very beginning, though the Guru had conceived and adopted it in the interest of this section of the society. Besides, these very hill chiefs were equally responsible for the ultimate defeat of the Sikhs and scattering their forces when the imperial troops advanced against the Sikhs under Guru Gobind Singh and almost destroyed completely the Guru's political influence, during their last siege of Anandpur.

It is noteworthy to state that this time, the splendour and dignity of the Court of Guru Gobind Singh was more than that of the Mughal Emperor. Every thing was available there which could add to the beauty and dignity of the Court. To beat and surpass, the Mughal Emperor's throne of gold at Delhi the Sikhs got built a temple of gold at Anandpur. For the construction of this temple huge quantity of gold began to pour in from all parts of the country. A massive building was constructed in a very astonishing manner as well as short time. Also the Sikh holy scriptures were placed therein.

It is a fact that people's moral and ethics had always been influenced by the riches and worldly splendour. The Guru, who was fully awakened, noticed that the collection of riches on which depended the large body of his troops was proving harmful to them. The people had become greedy; they also were becoming indifferent to the higher ideals of life. To finish the evil and display his supreme contempt for riches, all costly valuables were put to the flame. Even the treasure was thrown into the river Sutlej. After this it was demanded that the Guru, all his followers and his family members would lead simplest possible life. But this move of the Guru was opposed and it was conveyed that he was making it difficult rather impossible for his followers and disciples to strengthen his hands. Of course, there were a large number of followers who bowed before his desire and without questioning his authority obeyed in all things. They too were aware how abstemiously the Guru passed the latter part of his life. Majority of his friends and foes felt convinced by this principle that it was a sin to live luxuriously upon public offerings.

Another important task of the Tenth Master worth-stating is that he felt pleasure in visiting main places of pilgrimage. Everywhere he preached against superstitious beliefs. All possible efforts were made to eradicate evil practices of that time. It was in 1702 A.D. that the Guru along with his family members, accompanied by a strong band of men departed from Anandpur to witness an Eclipse fair at Thaneswar. Reaching there, the Guru preached the pure doctrines of his creed. He also displayed that he had no belief in the futile and absurd traditions and beliefs, prevalent in the society of that time. For example, the notion was that the offering of a cow facilitated the journey of a man after death. However, to attract general attention he offered an ass. When the Guru was asked to explain his act, he fully exposed such superstitions and futile notions; he asked the people to look to the Almighty alone for protection here as well as there.

In his absence at Anandpur, the hill-chiefs got an unopposed opportunity to again begin conspiracies against him. We have already noticed that the Guru's bodyguard consisted of a few hundred men alone. Thus, with a very small force it was held that it will be rather easy task to intercept him, on his way back to his home town i.e. Anandpur and remove him, without any difficulty, for ever. At this time, Said Beg and Alif Khan - two Muslim commanders, alongwith a huge force were advancing towards Lahore. The hill-*Rajas* duly supported by the *Pathans* of Ropar met the two Muslim commanders and requested them to wait for the Guru's arrival and finish him and his small force. Now the Mughal force fell upon the Guru when the latter was encamping in the area of Chamkaur. The Sikhs fought with great and desperate valour that Said Beg Khan, having feeling of admiration for the Guru and his men, came over to the Guru and asked the Guru to serve the Sikh cause. As a result of this change in Said Khan and due to his desperation Alif Khan was dispirited. He had to order a retreat. Hence ended a cowardly attempt to finish the one who was so unselfish in his life.

5. The Creation of Khalsa

The condition of Hinduism and also the Hindu society was extremely bad as well as deplorable during the period of Guru Gobind Singh. Several steps were adopted by the Mughal authorities as well as the Mughal Viceroys to suppress the Hindus and Hinduism throughout India. For instance, people other than the Muslims were forced to embrace Islam. We are fully aware of the fact that Punjab remained throughout, the gateway to our country for all the invaders - great and small who passed on their way to Delhi. As a consequence, the people of this province had been constantly bearing the brunt of the Muslim invasions for centuries. So, Punjab remained always in an unsettled condition. The religious places of the Hindus were demolished in a large number and the construction of new temples was strictly and absolutely banned.

Moreover, superstitions and awful ignorance prevailed. Similar to the 'dark ages', when complete Christendom trusted that seats in Heaven could be purchased through the intervention and blessings of the Popes, the Hindus were taught to give all they had to the *Pandits* and seek death to attain heaven earlier. At Benaras an infernal machine (*Kalwatra*) was built where thousands of pilgrims were sawn into pieces and their belongings taken away and divided by the shrewd but greedy *Pandits* among themselves. Several meaningless and futile practices were followed and performed. For example, to sit in the midst of fire heaps, to stand for weeks and months in cold water, breast deep, to lie on iron nails; to cause bodily pain to oneself by similar devices, to burn alive women on their husband's pyres, to offer human sacrifices at the altar of the so-called deities and many other meaningless practices could be really regarded as acts of merit. Hence, ignorant and innocent humanity was slain, robbed and looted by its own priests. Of course, some Hindu and Sikh *Sadhus* as well as learned *Brahmans* inculcated higher ideas - but they were very rare. Above all, caste taboos killed fellow feelings from the Hindus' minds and turned them tyrants to and suspicious of one another.

The most important event in the history of Sikhs is the creation of the *Khalsa*. It gave birth to a new force which created a marvellous history after this great event. In the face of a grave situation in view of a definite objective, Guru Gobind Singh carried out this great task with a remarkable success. The following circumstances necessitated the creation of the *Khalsa* :

India was under Aurangzeb who wanted to make it an Islamic State. Guru Teg Bahadur had to suffer martyrdom as a result of Aurangzeb's religious policy. He issued orders to the provincial governors that they should take steps to demolish the temples and *Gurdwaras* of the infidels and should put a stop to their educational and religious activities. According to Khafi Khan, a contemporary historian, Aurangzeb ordered the Sikh *Gurdwaras* to be pulled down and Guru's agents (*masands*) to be turned out of the cities and towns under the charge of collecting tithe (A religious tax) from the people. Aurangzeb re-imposed *Jazia* on the non-Muslims with the clear intention of pressurising the Hindus to embrace Islam so that India should have one religion.

It is a matter of history that Guru Gobind Singh had no intention of grabbing the territory. He wanted for the non-Muslims the freedom to have their own religious views and freedom to worship in their own way. The Guru wanted that the Government should observe equality in respect of their subjects whatever their religious affiliations. There should be no forcible conversions. In order to be able to defend themselves against the oppressive policy of the government and also to be able to help his weak and innocent countrymen, Guru Gobind Singh planned to provide every Singh with a sharp steel.

Secondly the Guru was not yet safe from the side of the hill chiefs. They nursed ill-will against the Guru probably because of their apprehensions that the Guru might usurp their territories as he was strong enough to do so. So they were always on the look out for an opportunity to turn the Guru out of the hill areas. Up to 1699 A.D. almost in all the attacks that were directed against the Guru at Anandpur or elsewhere the hill chiefs arranged themselves against the Guru. The Hindu priestly class who had received a set- back to their financial position consequent upon the various reforms, introduced by the Sikh Gurus, was hostile to Guru Gobind Singh and his followers. They kept on inciting the hill *Rajas* against the Guru and his growing power in the hills.

Thirdly, the *Masand* system had been organised at an elaborate scale by Guru Arjan with a view to preaching Guru Nanak's message among the people living away from the Guru's headquarters. The Guru could not personally visit every place to have a contact with his followers. He also needed money to be collected from the Sikhs for the various projects which the Guru had taken in hand. The *Masand* system worked wonderfully in its early stages. However, with the passage of time, corruption crept into the fold of this organisation. But in Guru Gobind Singh's time, the *Masand* system reached a state where its abolition became absolutely necessary and an alternative arrangement imperative. The Guru abolished the corrupt system before the creation of the *Khalsa*.

Fourthly, when Guru Gobind Singh began his work, there was no such thing as a Hindu nation. Since the fall of Anangpal, no leader had arisen in the Punjab. Although some Hindu *Zamindars* who called themselves *Rajas* still lived secretly in *Shivalik* hills. The Hindus had ceased to exist as a political power in the Panjab. Guru Nanak had done much to raise the morals of the people of Punjab but the work of making a nation of them was reserved for the exceptional genius of Guru Gobind Singh. The method he adopted to achieve his objective proved most effective under the circumstances. He had realised that the Hindus as a race were too mild by nature, too contented in their desire, too modest in their aspiration, too averse to physical exertion and hopelessly scrupulous in giving pain to others, even to their enemies. So they needed to be given a martial trend. He gave them an idea of nationalism of which the first element is unity. The caste was a great barrier to unity. He told them that caste was an after growth in the Hindu social system and nobody could be a true Sikh if he did not give up the prejudice of caste and did not regard all his fellow Sikhs as his brothers. Guru Gobind Singh not only wanted to make one caste out of the four, but he wanted to go a step further to remove religious privileges of certain sections and establish a theocratic democracy. By creating the *Khalsa*, he wanted to form a brotherhood in which the lowest was equal of the highest.

During those days, the Sikhs differed from the traditional Hindus merely in doctrinal matters mostly; but in all other matters they could not be differentiated from the Hindus in thought and deed. The teachings of the first to ninth Gurus had, undoubtedly, made them religious and earnest, more or less. However, their rigid social code yet swayed them and prohibited their existence as a separate community with right to frame laws for their own evolution. They still believed in Hindu *Avatars* and mythological heroes. Even their every day life was governed and directed by their superstitions and customs. They willingly allowed themselves to be involved in any brawl or combat in which the Hindus thought against the then ruling class. It is not surprising to state that they should have equally suffered with their Hindus kinsmen from both internal and external troubles.

The Tenth Master, Guru Gobind Singh wanted to organise his followers into a well-knit community. He found them scattered far and wide; secondly, they belonged to the different grades and castes of the Hindus. He wanted to organise them into a real brotherhood united not only by a community of beliefs, but by that of other worldly interests. Only reciting and singing of hymns as well as the recitation of the scriptures didn't satisfy him. He desired for the adoption of the means with which the Guru could inspire his people with the feelings of love, manliness and sacrifice.

Guru Gobind Singh, while preaching to his followers dwelt on the various merits that resulted from the performance of *'Haven'*. He told them that the mighty *Kashtrya*, from Rama of *Ramayan* down to Arjun of *Mahabharta*, owed their might and valour to the performance of *'Heaven'*. He also told that all the great warriors and saviours of humanity were blessed by the Goddess - *Kali* who was invoked during the performance of *'Havan'*. *Though*, the Guru did not have any faith in such rituals but he never opposed them. He even permitted his followers to perform this rite. The pressure and the need of circumstances and also a number of his disciples had convinced the master of its worth and utility. However some believe that the Guru wanted to show the absurdity of the notion. It does not appeal if we analyse the circumstances of his home. He succeeded in his mission as the goddess didn't appear, though months passed. The Guru also showed the hollowness of the *Brahman* who was conducting the *'Havan'*. Guru Gobind Singh was deeply pained to find several of his country men and women sunk deep in ignorance and reduced to slavery. The Guru prostrated himself before God and prayed for grant of power with which he could infuse a new life into his people, particularly the downtrodden. Soon the Guru received a reply when he heard that he had been blessed as God's son and commissioned to save humanity from ills, sufferings and sins. Hence, strengthened by divine power he appeared, having a naked sword in his hand, before a large gathering of his disciples and addressed them that the goddess had approved of him and asked if any one was ready to lay-down his life at its altar for his (Guru's) sake and also the community. No one responded to the call. Many appeared pale and colourless. But the call was repeated. This time Daya Ram Khatri of Lahore stood up and responded to the call by offering his head, who was taken into the adjoining tent. Down came the sword and the body fell with a dull sound. Blood flowed in torrents. The whole assembly was speechless with horror. Within no time the Guru came out of the tent and demanded another sacrifice. This time Dharma, a *Jat* offered himself for the cause. The same story was repeated. Now, struck with terror the *masands* rushed to *Mata* Gujri and told her that her son had actually lost his wits; that he was killing his own disciples by his own sword and that if she refused to intervene in time, then no one knew how many more lives would be lost. Naturally, the noble lady was pained to hear all this. However, before her agent came to find out what the matter was, three more brave and courageous men - Himmat, a water carrier, Sahiba, a barber; and Mohkam, a washerman, had offered themselves to be sacrificed. They too had been treated like the first two. A few minutes more passed. Now, the five bold and brave men stood in new attire before the calm and frightened assembly. Guru Gobind Singh followed them. He seated the '*Panj-Pyaras*' (Five Beloved) on the high platform along side of himself, as henceforward they were destined to be remembered and called in Sikh history. They were duly blessed on their being brave and fearless. The Guru was fully aware that these five were not the only gems he possessed. Many more were ready to lay down their lives for the sake of *dharma*. Now, Sikhism was a real force destined to work miracles. They noted that instead of taking the lives of the five *Pyaras* he had killed goats. He had followed this procedure to know if his men were ready to sacrifice their lives at his call. The device of the master proved absolutely successful to his great satisfaction.

Now, the disciples felt relieved of their long pent up feelings. The air resounded with the cries of *Sat Sri Akal*. Many of them should have been regretting for not offering themselves on Guru's call, while others were happy that the painful scene they had witnessed was ultimately over. This way that evening passed off pleasantly, of coursé, with mixed feelings.

Next morning i.e. Ist of *Baisakh, Samvat* 1756 *Vikrami* (1699 A.D.), the followers assembled in large numbers on the terrace of Kesgarh, in response to an invitation. The Guru, dressed in pure white, arrived and seated himself on the *'Gaddi'*. The 'Five Beloved' were sent for and produced in a queue before the Guru. They were asked to pronounce: '*Wah-i*-Guru, in audible voice, thrice and to concentrate their mind on the Almighty. An iron-bowl was sent for, some water and *Shakar* (Sugar) were put into it. The Guru himself stirred the water, hence mixed, with the point of the two edged dagger having in his right hand. While sanctifying the water, the Guru recited hymns in praise of the Timeless one - the Lord. Hence, the water was converted into '*Amrita*' which that when taken made mortals immortals. It was then, by turns administered to the '*Panj Pyaras*' who were made to shout aloud thereupon *Wah-i*-Guru *ji Ka Khalsa, Sri Wah-i*-*Guruji Ki-Fateh*! They were also asked to recite a few hymns in praise of the 'Timeless One' and soon after they all partook of *'Karah Parshad'* from the same vessel to tell that they denounced caste prejudices, so far as these affected inter-dining.

After this Guru Gobind Singh told them frankly and firmly that thence forward they all were brothers and members of one church called *Khalsa*. They should consider themselves as the true disciples of the Lord on one hand; and on the other, regard the Guru as their spiritual father and the Guru's wife Sahib Kaur as their mother. They were to preach the ideals of brotherhood of man and to believe in one Supreme-being i. e. the Almighty. They were all to assume the name of *Singh* meaning lion and must carry arms on their person. They should wear dress suited to the life of a trooper. They must abstain from tobacco and other intoxicants in any form. They were to stand by one another in time of need as well as trouble. Lastly, in all that they did or performed, they were to be fair and upright. Then, the Guru himself partook *Amrita* from the same vessel and also partook of *Karah Prashad* offered by the *Panj-Pyaras* - The Five Beloved.

After creating the *Khalsa* the Guru merged himself into it. The manner in which the Guru had baptised the 'Beloved Five' and he got baptism from them in the same manner and made himself a part of the *Khalsa*. Guru Gobind Singh made himself the Guru as well the disciple. The creator did not want to remain separate from his creation. He made himself an integral part of his creation and declared the *Khalsa* to be greater than the Guru himself.

According to Gokal Chand Narang, "Abolition of caste prejudices, equality of privileges with one another and with the Guru, common worship, common place of pilgrimage, common baptism for all classes, and lastly common external appearance- these were the means, besides common leadership and community of aspirations which Guru Gobind Singh employed to bring about unity among his followers and by which he bound them together into a compact mass before they were hurled against the legions of the great Mughals."

He brought about a revolution in the society by abolishing the caste distinctions among his followers. Partaking food by all from the common mess and sitting in the *Sangat* at the same level had created a sense of social equality. Such attempts had already been successfully made by the former Gurus. But Guru Gobind Singh went still further. He embraced the *Shudras* like Jaita saying, "*Rangretta* Guru *Ka Beta*." He made the *Brahmins, Khatris, Jats*, barbers, water carriers etc., take '*Amrit*' (baptism) from the same level. He did away with untouchability and distinctions of pure and impure on the basis of castes and brought all sections of society closer to each other.

One of the objectives of Guru Gobind Singh behind the creation of the *Khalsa* was to bring the downtrodden and the out-castes of the society to the level of the so-called superior species of humanity. What the other medieval saints and social reformers could not do, was accomplished by the Tenth Guru. Formerly the caste of family in which a person was born was the determining factor regarding his status in the society. This principle which had been practised in the country for centuries was discarded and contemptuously set aside by Guru Gobind Singh as it was the base of the social affinity and mutual love and affection. By receiving the *Amrit* (baptism) the Sikhs were told to have become *Kritnash*, *Kulnash*, *Dharam-nash* and *Karamnash* i.e. they were absolved from their former position in the society on the basis of their profession, their family, their religion and their actions.

Thus we see that the creation of the *Khalsa* evoked a miracle in abolishing the social distinctions. After initiation a person could claim and was readily given the status equal to any other member of the *Khalsa Panth.* Even the people who had been considered as dregs of humanity were changed as if by magic, into something rich and strange. The sweepers, barbers and confectioners who had never so much as touched the sword and whose generation had lived as grovelling slaves of the so-called high classes became under the stimulating leadership of Guru Gobind Singh, doughty warriors who never shrank from fear and who were ready to rush into the jaws of death at the bidding of the Guru.

Under the various Gurus, the Sikh community had undergone a course of discipline until its character was fully developed and the Guru merged himself in the body of the nation thus reared. Guru Gobind Singh invested the *Panth* with his personality or in other words, the *Khalsa Panth* was to be the Guru in future. A little before his death Guru Gobind Singh told the sorrowing Sikhs that he would appoint no human successor. The Sikhs asked him as to how they would be able to have the Guru's *darshan* henceforth. He replied, "I have bestowed Guruship to the *Khalsa*. *Khalsa* is my true self and shall always live in the *Khalsa*. In this way, the complete charge of the temporal leadership, was given to the Sikhs in 1708, during the last moments of his earthy existence".

Guru Gobind Singh brought Guru*ship* on a level with his followers. Although the *Khalsa* was destined by the Guru himself yet the Guru was so much charmed and fascinated by his own creation that he saluted it as his own ideal and master. It was introducing a spiritual socialism in the domain of religion. He told Sikhs that the Guru was the *Khalsa* and the *Khalsa* was the Guru. This brings out in clear terms how earnestly the Guru wished his followers to lead a corporate life. The importance attached to *Guruship* did not, however, create a community depending on autocratic leadership. The *Khalsa* commonwealth did not belong to any individual not even to the Guru, the creator of the order, but it belonged to those who constituted it.

Guru Gobind Singh had converted the Guru *Sangat* into the *Khalsa* of the *Wahi* Guru, the Supreme Lord, and declared that the Sikhs and their victory belonged to Him. And the creator raised his creation to a status superior to himself when he said:

> "It is due to them that
> I am holding an exalted place
> I was born to serve them
> Through them I reached eminence
> What would I have been without
> Their kind and ready help?
> There are millions of insignificant people
> like me."

The code of conduct prescribed for the *Khalsa* was so framed as to impose a strict discipline on the Sikhs. They were to stick to the high ideals of Sikhism. According to Senapat, the aim of Guru Gobind Singh in founding the *Khalsa Panth* was to build up a community that would live a virtuous life and would be able to rescue the people from evildoers and the tyrants. The basic character of the Sikh *Panth* to be good and virtuous was never allowed to be changed. Once the Sikhs asked the Guru why the Sikh rules of conduct prohibited the Sikhs from carrying the women of the Muslims as captive as a retaliatory measure. To this, the Guru replied, "I wish to raise the *Panth* - the Sikh community to a much higher plane and not to push it down into the depths of hell". The *Khalsa* always maintained this lofty ideal of the Guru. The steel was taken to be an adjunct to spirituality as the protector of the old values of righteousness rather than a means of aggression and oppression.

Guru Gobind Singh felt that the ideals of humility and surrender have no appeal to a tyrant whose soul is deadened by repeated acts of oppression and who understood the language of the cold steel alone. He was thoroughly convinced that force had to be met by force and that is why he almost defied the sword. He considered the Sword to be the hand of God to punish evil- doers with:

Sword, thou art the protector of the saints.
Thou art the scourge of the wicked.
Shatterer of sinners; I take refuge in thee.

The Guru had such high regards for the sword which had been included in the five *K's*, or the essential items of the *rahit* prescribed for a Singh. It must not to be understood that Guru Gobind Singh believed in the dictum 'might is right'. It was assumed, that the wielder of sword must be imbued with divine mission. It must be used for the furtherance of the rightous acts. The sword used for such a purpose signifies divine beneficence. But if it is used for oppression and for the attainment of power it loses its significance. Even where the use of the sword is permissible, it is to be used only as a last resort when all other means fail, it is justifiable to unsheathe the sword. The Guru had sought from God that he might be able to use the sword for a righteous cause. The Guru's sword like the surgeon's knife was not for shedding blood but for rescuing the healthy part of human body from the growing effect of the diseased one.

With the creation of the *Khalsa*, Guru Gobind Singh planned to start a *Dharamyudh* (a holy war) against the enemies of righteousness and goodness. *Dharamyudh*, as the term suggests means a war against un-righteousness and for the protection of good virtues. It does not mean a mad struggle for power. When the use of sweet reasonableness and gentle persuasion fails to bring about a change of heart in the oppressors, it is perfectly legitimate, according to the philosophy of *Dharamyudh* to resort to armed resistance. So the *Khalsa* was charged with the responsibility of promoting with force, if necessary, the cause of righteousness.

The new baptism was in sharp contrast to the earlier practices of *charanpahul* touching the baptismal water with the toe of Guru's foot which continued - till Guru Arjan's time. Since the time of Guru Hargobind Singh an improved practice of preparing the *Pahul* (baptism) through a body of five Sikhs who touched the water with their hand thumbs and sanctified the same by the recitation of the scriptures had been in vogue till 1699 A.D. when the baptism of the double edged sword was administered to the Sikhs.

According to Dr. Fauja Singh ideologically the creation of the *Khalsa* aimed at a well balanced combination of the ideas of *Bhagti and Shakti*, of moral and spiritual excellence and militant valour or heroism of the highest order. The use of double edged sword in the preparation of *amrit* was a psychological booster. The changing of names at the time of initiation as a part of the new mode of baptism, was also intended to revolutionize the psyche of the Sikhs.

Further the Guru impressed the *Khalsa* with the belief that they were under the special control and protection of God. They were taught as an article of faith to believe that God was always present in the general body of the *Khalsa* and that whenever five Sikhs assembled the Guru would be with them.

But the *Singhs* were not to be merely soldiers. It was necessary that they must at the same time be saints, deeply devoted to God, singing His hymns as composed by the Gurus observing the daily religious discipline prescribed in the *rahit* of the *Khalsa* and bearing high moral character. There was no contradiction between the twin ideal of soldering and saintliness. In fact, they were complement to each other. Spiritual and moral values had to be protected with military strength if they were to be saved for humanity. While creating the *Khalsa*, Guru Gobind Singh, did not forget to confer upon it a mark of distinctiveness in the form of unshorn hair of the head and beard. Without any cost, this measure not only gave the Sikhs a bearing suited to the ideology in which they were nurtured but also made it impossible for them to conceal their identity in future.

The *Khalsa* as a combined body of the Sikhs was made the supreme authority amongst the Sikhs in all matters. No leader however great could challenge the authority of the *Khalsa* and introduce any innovation in the rules of conduct of the *Khalsa Panth*. No one could dare go against the wishes of the *Khalsa* which was supreme in the Sikh Polity and the guidance of the community lay in their collective wisdom and decision. The rules that we come across in the pageant of Sikh history were verily the part and parcel of the *Khalsa* commonwealth in whose name they functioned. Indeed, it was the *Khalsa* who led the community, as a whole and not the few leaders whatever their individual merit.

Guru Gobind Singh firmly believed that spiritual achievements must be combined with physical power. The one without the other may degenerate into sheer helplessness or ruthless tyranny. That is why, the Tenth Guru besides advocating spiritual uplift, attempted to revive the spirit of valour by means of heroic literature, martial training and glorification of the weapons of war. In the words of Cunningham, "The last apostle of the Sikhs effectively roused the dormant energies of a vanquished people and filled them with a lofty though fitful longing to social freedom and national ascendency, the proper adjuncts of the purity of worship which had been preached by Nanak."

With the creation of the *Khalsa*, according to Indubhushan Banerjee, militarism was adopted as an article of creed and the leadership of community was left to the community itself, thus bringing into existence a military commonwealth with the fullest of democratic freedom. The entire outlook of the community was now transformed as it took upon its shoulders the responsibility of combating all sorts of tyranny and oppression with means adequate for the purpose. The Guru had declared that sufferings, injustice and oppression at the hands of the government or anybody else who was in a position to commit it, was no more to be tolerated lying down and therefore was obliged to place reliance on the power of arms. The Guru's conception of the *Khalsa*, therefore, was a fully democratic, compact community, armed to the teeth, struggling to maintain what it conceived to be the right path and fighting incessantly and without fear tyranny and injustice in all their forms.

The Guru never claimed divinity for himself. He denounced those who tried to hail him as an incarnation of God. "Whosoever regards me as Lord shall be damned and destroyed. I am and let there be no doubt, but a slave of God, as other men are, a beholder of the wonder of creation." He took no credit for what he did. He attributed all his victories, his prestige and his power, to the *Khalsa*. The creation of the *Khalsa* gave a distinct national character to the Sikh community. The dry bones of an oppressed peasantry were stirred into life and there was a large increase in the number of the Sikhs.

Jadunath Sarkar had incorrectly remarked that "Guru Gobind Singh organised the Sikhs to suit a special purpose. He called in the human energy of the Sikhs from all other sides and made it flowing in one particular channel, only; they ceased to be full, free men. He converted the spiritual unity of the Sikhs into a means of worldly success, he dwarfed the unity of a religious sect into an instrument of political advancement. Hence the Sikhs, who had been advancing for centuries to be true men, suddenly stopped short and became mere soldiers". It is a wrong and baseless statement that Guru Gobind Singh had in any way given up the essentials of Guru Nanak's teachings which formed, as it were, the core of Sikhism. In Indubhushan Banerjee's opinion, Jadunath commits himself to the absurd proposition that military efficiency, or political freedom is inconsistent with a true religious life. A leader cannot write on a clear slate and had to act within the framework of facts presented by a given situation.

Jadunath is wrong in saying that Guru Gobind Singh fell from the high principles of religion laid down by Guru Nanak and his successors. Gokal Chand Narang has correctly summed up the position that "Gobind himself, in fact as well as his work, was the natural product of the process of evolution that had been going on ever since the formation of Sikhism. The harvest which ripened in the time of Guru Gobind Singh had been sown by Guru Nanak and watered by his successors. The sword which carved the *Khalsa's* way to glory was undoubtedly forged by Gobind but the steel had been provided by Nanak."

The code of the *Khalsa* as prescribed by Guru Gobind Singh was strictly observed by Banda Singh and eigtheenth century *Sardars* of the Sikh *Misals*. The *Khalsa* ideas served as beacon light for the Sikh Chiefs. When the people found their leaders, just out of ignorance, likely to stray away from those ideas which were based on religion and not narrow communalism or fanaticism, they called them a halt and showed them the right path. The *Panth* or the *Khalsa* commonwealth was considered by all Sikhs a very sacred creation of the Gurus, reared into its final shape by Guru Gobind Singh. In respect of their duties towards the *Khalsa* commonwealth, no Sikh including the Sikh chiefs enjoyed any exemption. None could pose to be above the *Khalsa*. No single individual or a group of individuals, could be considered superior or equal to the entire body of the community. No *Sardar*, could ever think like the Mughal ruler that he belonged to different category and was one specially blessed and destined by God to rule others and exercise and enjoy distinctive rights and privileges vis-a-vis the *Khalsa*. He always kept before his mind that his position was not due to any of his personal qualities but all are due to the grace of the Guru and the *Khalsa*. The Sikh chiefs, time and again declared that they were the humble servants of the *Panth* subservient to its will, working for the good and pleasure of the *Khalsa* Commonwealth.

To take *Amrit* (baptism of the double-edged sword) and become a member of the *Khalsa* was required of every Sikh. The Sikh who was not duly baptised could not be elected their leader by the people. They had all to adopt the *rahit* (code of conduct) of the *Khalsa* and abide by it. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia received *Amrit* from Sardar Kapur Singh and Ala Singh received Amrit from the hands of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia. The founder of the Kanhiya Misal Amar Singh Sanghania, considered it absolutely necessary to baptise a person into a 'Singh' before accepting him into his *dera* or camp. The *Sardars* of *Misals* were generally known by the appellation of "*Singh Sahib*".

Guru Gobind Singh had enjoined upon the Sikhs to take their decisions through *Panchayat* councils and all important decisions relating to common interest of the community must have the approval of those whom they were meant for. The Sikh chief were alive to the democratic ideals inculcated by the Sikh Guru and they followed them to the best of their power. The *Gurmata* was a strong expression of this noble ideals of democratising the *Panthic* decisions. The practice of electing a leader of the *Misal* in the earlier stages and electing the leader of the *Dal Khalsa* were in pursuance and fulfilment of same ideal of the republican and democratic spirit of the *Khalsa*. According to Gokal Chand Narang "Guru Gobind Singh was the first Indian leader who taught democratic principles and made his followers regard each other as *Bhai* or brother and act by *Gurmata* or General council."

The chiefs ruled in the name of the Guru and the *Khalsa* as is so well apparent from their coins. Guru Gobind Singh defied the weapons and held them in high regard and veneration. The same devotion for the weapons was kept up by the Sikhs in the eighteenth century. At the head of the important documents and treaties concluded between the Sikh *Sardar* and others, a mark of the sword was imprinted.

In the end, we may say that Guru Gobind Singh recognised no invidious distinction between men based on religion or social affiliation. With the creation of the *Khalsa*, he did everything possible to make the foundation of national solidarity broad based and firm. His supreme contribution to India's history is taking a firm stand against political tyranny and religious persecution with the help of organisation of brotherhood based on equality and democracy which cut across all artificial walls and barriers and developed a social conscience among the masses. And the code of conduct prescribed for the *Khalsa* lighted the path of the Sikhs over the centuries and gave strength to its members to bear hardships and privations in the extreme degree. Without the creation of the *Khalsa*, there would have been no political future for them in history.

In fact, with the creation of the *khalsa*, a new era in the history of the country's reform began. Before the Tenth Master, not even a single man was there who could be regarded as a person of such a high descent and stature and who had taken such a courageous step and faced the consequent risks. Merely with one stroke the great Guru abolished distinctions that had engendered selfishness and hatred. This evil had also made spiritual and political slaves of the Hindus as well as other non-Muslims. The new community with these beliefs and aspirations led by a unique personality so august and courageous began its career. Men belonging to the downtrodden orders of the non-Muslim society were turned into great leaders and brave warriors. Here, it is noteworthy to state that earlier peasants who were never mentioned in history and kept in ignorance knowingly, became fighters and preachers of the new Gospel and very courageously and strongly entered into discussions with the advocates of the old, dead and dying faiths. Their simple ideas, simple habits, pure and pious lives and sincere reverence and earnestness for setting-up of the virtuous reign won them unending universal praise. Their very contact, nay the very sight of them served as a spell. Despite themselves men felt a strong longing to be admitted into a new *panth* (Faith or fold).

Above all, hereafter, neglected and downtrodden humanity all of a sudden was roused into action. It became fully aware and alert to their rights as well as their might and sought for chances to exhibit it. The members of the new creed and faith worked, lived and died for what they regarded to be good and dignified. Now, they proved straightforward, outspoken, without deceit, and trusted, strong and firm friends of the feeble and the defenceless and implacable foes of the mighty and the oppressive. They began to be feared as well as honoured wherever they lived or went. They were no longer quiet, timid, hymn-singing devotees and disciples with little ambition or spirit. They no longer submitted quietly to the vain, selfish and privileged classes which had never allowed them to raise their head rather kept them down from time immemorial and had made them menials. They no longer looked with respect on the religious scriptures that had made it criminal for them to aspire for things higher. Their souls freed from the slavery of ages; their eyes were opened, minds widened and they vigorously turned their attention to the exposure of false pretences and all injustices in religions, politics and social autonomy. The position and power of the priestly-classes and their followers among *Rajputs* and *Kashatryas* was defied and, taught by a leader who though so high, liked to be considered as one of them, they were taught that they were Almighty's troopers despatched down to protect his kingdom and penalise his foes.

6. Guru And The Mughals

SOON, Guru Gobind Singh came back to Anandpur. There the Master resumed his routine avocations. One day, a *Brahman* approached the Guru with this complaint that when he was coming back to his home, with his newly wedded wife, one Jabbar Khan - a leading *Pathan* of Bassi, forcibly took her with him and detained her in his house. He also explained that he had approached and appealed for assistance to all men of influence of the locality but in vain. He came to him with a great hope and had a full confidence that the Guru, a saviour of the weak and downtrodden, would help him, rescue his wife and restore her to him. His appeal with the Guru succeeded. *Sahebzada* Ajit Singh, at once, was despatched to rescue the bride and bring Jabbar Khan, bound hand and foot, to Anandpur. The very next early morning Ajit Singh and his party forced their entrance into the village - Bassi. All those who resisted were killed. The culprit was arrested and brought to Anandpur. The bride was restored to the *Brahman*. Finally, Jabbar Khan was put to death. The punishment given to this *Pathan* was so exemplary that for years, such crime was not repeated by any one.

Besides, the Sikhs could not forget and forgive the treacherous conduct of hill-*Rajas* in stopping and troubling the Guru when the latter was coming back from Thaneswar with small escort. As a result, whenever they got an opportunity they wrecked their vengeance on the Muslims as well as the hill-men. Now, the hill-*Rajas* again attacked Anandpur with a heavy force; but when they noticed that it was not an easy task to defeat the Sikhs, they were forced to lift the siege. A war council was held. There they decided to approach the Mughal Emperor for help. So, they adopted a petition in this regard. It was sent to him. In this they sought his assistance. They conveyed to the Emperor that the Sikhs under Guru's command had raised a standard of rebellion. Moreover, he was planning and preparing to invade Delhi and avenge his father's (Guru Tegh Bahadur) death by expelling the Muslims from the imperial Capital.

Aurangzeb spent nearly last 26 years of his life in curbing disturbances in different parts of his empire and also in conquering Bijapur and Golkunda. During this long period of 26 years he faced several enemies among the Muslims and Non-Muslims of *Hindustan* proper (North India) as well as the Deccan. In fact, they were the consequence of his policy of distrust and blind fanaticism. His absence for a long span created many problems for him in the North. The despatches of his commanders in the Punjab displayed the seriousness of affairs. The limited military sources of the Emperor were hardly sufficient to face the situation nearer home. He could not afford to part with some of his troops as he himself was engaged in the fight. The removal of forces would provide an opportunity to the restless spirit, in his dominion, to trouble the people. As a result, he very cleverly chalked out a plan which cost him nothing and absolutely met the needs of the case.

So, Aurangzeb wrote to two of his *Nawabs* i.e. one Wazir Khan of Sirhind and the other *Nawab* of Lahore to proceed against Anandpur, demolish it and make the Guru prisoner and bring him to Delhi. *Firmans* (orders) were issued under the royal-seal to all defenders of the Faith in the Punjab as well as its North-West frontier to finish the rising infidel power. *Nawab* Mohammad Khan of Malerkotla, Usman Khan of Qasur, Shams Khan of Bijwara, Najib Khan of Jullundur and a number of petty chiefs from Jhang, Multan, Bahawalpur and centre of Gakhar influence, now comprising the districts of Rawalpindi, Attock and Hazara, began with the courage and boldness of the early

Christan Crusaders, on a holy war against the Tenth Master - Guru Gobind Singh. A large number of wandering tribes of *Rajput* hill-men also joined them as they were equally unfriendly and inimically towards the Sikhs because of two reasons : (i) their being ultra-radicalism and (ii) their arrogance in adopting the forms and names which *Rajputs* alone had assumed from time immemorial. This wandering crowd encamped at the distance of a few miles from Anandpur.

The news of this campaign against the Guru spread throughout the land. Consequently, bands of Sikh disciples started arriving in Anandpur from different directions. Before any fight took place Guru Gobind Singh had about 10,000 men. However, they were not well equipped. On the other hand, the Mughal army was consisted of over a hundred thousand well-equipped men. Moreover, they were accustomed to fighting and could face the troubles and hardships of war. But there was a divided house. They were, though nominally, under two or three commanders but they looked to their respective leader for taking the initiative. In this respect, the Guru and his men were at an advantage. Above all, the Tenth Master was to the Sikhs more a God than an ordinary man.

It was *Sahebzada* Ajit Singh, assisted by Said Beg Khan and Manu Khan, who on seeing the vanguard of the imperial army, advanced against the advancing troops of the Mughals. They gave them battle, but the fight was desperate. In fact, the battle was dreaded. In it Said Beg Khan and Manu Khan fell; many hill-*Rajput Rajas* and several hundreds of Muslim soldiers including officers were killed. Even the loss of the Sikhs was not small. They were wounded and killed in large numbers. However, their moral gain was enormous. The noteworthy fact which is to be cited here is that the Muslims even failed to come too near Anandpur. Secondly, no great battle took place afterwards . The Muslim commanders avoided close fight because of their past experience.

Now, Anandpur was besieged on all sides. Even its communication with the outside world was cut off. This siege lasted for a few months. However, Ajit Singh and other generals on this side showed valour as well as determination. They frequently came out and attacked the imperial store houses, unaware and took away a large quantity of provisions. They carried on their raids in the night as well as in day time. Daya Singh, Dharm Singh, Sahib Singh, Udai Singh and Alam Singh led these raids. However, this source of supply could not meet their needs. Even the Guru himself made a great effort and led out his men against the Muslim invaders. In this fight the Muslim army suffered heavily but not to the extent that it was forced to raise the siege. The protracted operations, of course, made them nervous and impatient. They took it as a serious reflection on their courage and bravery that with such a huge force, they would not have taken so many months to reduce the Sikh Guru to subjection. As a result, they were rebuked for their incompetency. They also knew that if their expedition failed, they would be disgraced and exposed to the public mockery. All these factors forced them to take Anandpur. Twice they forcibly penetrated into Anandpur by breaking the gates open but they met with a heavy-loss and had to retreat. Their all attempts were defeated by the vigilance of the guards in the fortress of Anandpur. They felt completely exhausted and finally decided to raise the siege; but the shrewd and corrupt hill-*Rajas* prevailed upon the imperial forces to employ craft and hence got rid of the hated foe.

At this stage the hill-Chiefs conveyed to the Mughals that the Sikhs were reduced to the verge of starvation; so they would willingly evacuate Anandpur if they were assured of safe passage by the Mughal authorities. This suggestion was accepted by the imperial authorities and was duly conveyed to the Guru Sahib through a special envoy. When the envoy reached, some of the Sikhs, who were not used to war and wanted an opportunity to leave the place, approached *Mata* Gujri and humbly requested her to prevail upon the Guru to accept the proposal and hence prevent extinction from starvation and thirst of the Sikhs who had served him with loyalty and dedication. The tender hearted lady at once went to the *Diwan Khana* where she asked the Guru for his firmness in sticking to Anandpur - the place which had been the reason of so much trouble and misery to her family ever since it was occupied. She also suggested him to move to Malwa because its people were mostly followers of the Guru. Moreover, there he would have greater freedom in maturing and advancing his plans. She also told him, if he rejected the offer it would be a serious mistake and a mere cruelty to see a large number of loyal and loving adherents die of starvation and other sufferings at the hands of the enemies.

However, the Guru was firm and did not listen to the suggestion. The Guru replied here with great firmness but reverence that he did not have any trust in the words of either the Turks or of the hill-*Rajas*. The pitcher of cruelties of both these aggressive people was full and the time was not far away when they would be taken to task for their misdeeds. He understood that the Generals as well as their troops who were besieging Anandpur had exhausted completely of continuing their operations; and he was absolutely sure that if his followers patiently and calmly tolerated the difficulties for some days more, the siege would be raised and with this all troubles and misery would then be over. But *Mata* Gujri was not convinced by his words and she left Gobind Singh in anger. But before she left, she asked him that if he stuck to his words, none of the Sikhs would stay with him.

After *Mata* Gujri left the Guru, he sent for the Sikhs and told them that they should feel free to go if they disown him as their master and approve their names to be listed, thereafter as '*Bedawa*'. Several followers of the Guru, who were reduced to mere skeletons, by hunger and disease, took this desperate step and thus left for their homes. However, still many followers were there because they could not think of leaving their master alone. They told the Guru that they had devoted themselves to him body and soul, and that death with the Guru was dearer to them than life without him, i.e. Guru Gobind Singh.

Besides, death from hunger was the most terrible of all deaths. So, many Sikhs again went to *Mata* Gujri and repeated their request and asked her to use her influence with the Guru and persuade him to evacuate Anandpur. But she knew her son well. Moreover, by this time she was fully convinced about his mission. She told them that she could not help. Now, they asked her that at least she should along with Guru's wife and her son leave the place. She at once agreed to disregardful of the Guru's wishes, trusting that by doing so she must save the lives of the members of her family as also of the Sikhs who were so dedicated to Guru's family.

One can easily understand about the Guru's feelings, when he came to know about the preparations of some of his own men for departure, of course, against his wishes. Now, he could not think of going against the wishes of *Mata* Gujri. Consequently, he, too, decided to accompany his family and followers. But before taking this decision he could not help saying that the step taken was suicidal and that if they had waited a few days more the difficulties would have been over. At last the party, consisting of ladies and children of the Guru's family, escorted by the *'Panj Pyaras'* and other loyal warriors left Anandpur, while the Guru and his selected Lieutenants protected the flanks. The party was moving in order and very calmly but when they had gone at a short distance, Muslim commanders, provoked by *Raja* Ajmer Chand, ordered an attack on Guru's party. However, the Sikhs returned the fire. It was *Sahebzada* Ajit Singh who stopped to face the enemy and for a very brief span prevented their march which enabled the Guru's party to cover a distance of a few miles. Shortly, reinforcement reached, the Guru's party was overpowered by the imperial forces. As a consequence, some were killed and many were wounded. Rest fled in all directions but were killed by the inductive people of the hill-states. Guru along with his family and a few followers retreated towards Chamkaur; but their march was obstructed by the hill torrent river Sirsa. Meantime the imperial force came upon them. Guru realised that resistance was absolutely impossible. As a result he along with his two sons - Ajit Singh and Jujhar Singh plunged into the - Sirsa and escaped. Guru's two wives in the disguise of males were escorted to Delhi. There they got shelter with Jawahar Singh, who was one of the Guru's disciples. *Mata* Gujri with two younger *Sahebzadas* - Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh, who were still mere children, concealed herself in a cave. One old *Pandit*, Ganga Ram, a family servant of the Tenth Master, was in attendance upon her. He offered *Mata* Gujri the shelter of his house in Kheri Village, a few miles away. She acceded to his request gladly because of the circumstances. However, the *Brahman* proved notorious because he lodged the lady and two *Sahebzadas* at his house. He also deposited their luggage which contained jewellery and many other valuables in some secret place.

On the other hand, the Guru along with his two elder sons and a hundred men proceeded towards Ropar. But the party was attacked by the *Pathans* on the way. However, the Sikhs didn't lose courage. Instead, they fought with their usual valour and inflicted a very heavy loss on their old enemy. Their number, too was reduced to 40 by the time they reached Chamkaur. But the place, where the party halted, was fully exposed to the attack of the foe who were chasing them closely. Here, a poor *Jat* - *Gariba* - offered the Guru and his party shelter in a Kinsman's formidable house. In fact, it was an offer too good to be turned-down. Immediately the party reached there and with the villagers' help attended to necessary repairs.

Early morning, next day the Mughal forces surrounded the redoubt. The Sikhs fought like lions as they had profited from their night rest. The enemy ranks were terrorised by their arrows. At last, the ammunition and provisions were finished and no hope of escape except disgraceful surrender was left. Ajit Singh who was hardly 17 years of age, begged leave to emerge from the fortress and die fighting. His request was accepted. Now, he alongwith some notable Sikhs --Mohkam Singh Pyara, Ishwar Singh, Lal Singh, Nand Singh, Kesra Singh, Mohar Singh and nearly half a dozen more Sikhs came out of the redoubt. Reciting the name of the Timeless One and having a sword in hand Ajit Singh fell upon the enemy like a lion. Both the sides were forced to admire the skill and valour with which he fought.

Now, *Nazim* Wazir Khan and Zabardast Khan who in person witnessed the fight, ordered some of their bravest soldiers to engage with Ajit Singh and his followers, in hand to hand fight; however, none dared advance. The end of this encounter could not be delayed. Having killed a regular host of the enemy *Sahebzada* Ajit Singh died a hero's death leaving his name immortal for all times. Jujhar Singh seeing his brother die so gloriously went to his father - Gobind Singh - and asked him to allow him to take the place of his brother and to die likewise. The Guru was highly pleased as well as moved to notice the courage on the part of his son who was hardly fourteen. The Guru at once acceded to his request and sent him into the battle field.

Let it be noticed that Jujhar was known for his handsome and pleasing nature and also manners, which had made the *Sahebzada* universal favourite and loving. After having the permission, he was nicely dressed and well-armed. He along with Himmat Singh; Sahib Singh and nearly half a dozen more bold and courageous disciples of the Guru joined the fight.. The brave Jujhar had not gone far when he felt his lips parch, all of a sudden. So he stopped for a while and asked for some water. "Darling", said the Guru, "angels are awaiting thee for a cup of water of immortality! Go and take it in the company of thy brother!" (It is cited in Bhagat Lakshman Singh's work). The words of the Tenth Master give a clear idea about Guru Gobind Singh's character, mission, vision and personality.

Now, the young boy did not wait for any thing; even he did not cast another look on his associates whom he was leaving behind. He was deeply inspired and moved by the enthusiasm of the moment, Jujhar plunged himself into the thick of the battle. He fell on his prey and fought very bravely. However, in hand to hand fight he too along with his many associates was slayed. Thus, he departed with the last rays of the departing sun. But, the illustrious Guru Gobind Singh not withstanding that he had lost his equally illustrious sons as well as several of his brave followers, appeared to be inspired with greater valour than he ever had. Though night had spread its curtains; the Guru's arrows continued piercing several breasts. The bullets from the ramparts yet rained death on the men below. The foe, however, didn't appear to mind this continuous discharge of firearms; rather they were now sure that, in the following morning , they would be able either to kill the Guru or take him prisoner. At last they stopped fighting; but ordered a small detachment to keep watch on the Sikhs' party who returned to their tents to pass the night.

Under the circumstances, Dharam Singh, Daya Singh and Bhai Mani Singh - the *Pyaras* requested their master and finally prevailed upon him that he should escape accompanied by them while leaving the fortress to the charge of a few Sikh leaders named *Bhai* Sangat Singh, Ram Singh, Jeevan Singh and Katha Singh. At the dead of night when all was calm outside the redoubt, Guru Gobind Singh along with three *Pyaras* escaped evading the vigilance of the enemy guard. Though there was dense dark and not a sound was audible, the party had not gone far off when the advance guard noticed that some persons were escaping. They raised alarm and the whole camp was disturbed. Now, troops rushed to and fro. Confusion was created and in this Guru Gobind Singh and his attendants were separated. Next morning, in the early hours, the Guru reached the outskirts of one village Kheri. Two *Gujjars* - Alfu and Gamu were grazing their cattle in the field at this hour. They recognised the Guru and checked him on the way. The Guru offered them a few pieces of gold as gift but their good gesture could not be secured. Ultimately, the Guru put them to the sword. When the sun rose, the Guru had reached the vicinity of Bahlolpur. Catching sight of a dense bunch of trees, the Guru laid himself down under their shade; but no water was in sight. It is believed that he quenched his thirst with the milk of the leaves of the *Aq* plant. As a consequence, he fell asleep, but chiefly on account of heavy fatigue.

The whole day the Guru remained in sleep. It was at night fall, on regaining consciousness Guru Gobind Singh, at once decided to resume his journey; but he could not take up the journey as his strength had failed. In fact, the Tenth Master had covered a long distance from Chamkaur bare-footed; his limbs were torn due to the rough and thorny paths. Ultimately, he took up the journey, but he had not gone far off when his legs refused to work. Now he laid on the grass and the blood was flowing profusely from his limbs. Even hunger and thirst were teasing him. He did not lose heart; rather he gathered courage and decided to go and convey to the Divine Preceptor these hardships and sufferings of him and his followers. Bhagat Lakshman Singh has narrated in his book this tale in a vivid manner - "Dear friend" says Guru Gobind Singh in the hymn. "where thou art not, there soft beds are to me like disease; residence in mansions like living among serpents; wine bottles like the cross; wine cups like the sword; all this like death from a butcher's knife! Indeed my Friend's turf is better, far better! Cursed be residence in palaces!"

This way Guru passed the night singing the glory of the Almighty and remembering Him in words expressing the sincere gratitude. A little before day break, refreshed by the night breeze and feeling some what better he advanced towards Malwa. But soon he sank again from merely fatigue, at a garden, in Machhiwara's suburbs. It was a matter of coincidence that Dharam Singh, Daya Singh and Bhai Mani Singh reached the same garden in their search for Guru Gobind Singh. Soon they were told by some one, who was working there, that a person dressed like him was seen lying in another part of the garden. They went there and found their Guru lay prostrate before them. Gradually and calmly they reached near him and kissed his feet. The Guru at once laid his hand on his sword thinking it must be the touch of his foes. However, the moment his eyes opened, he found his beloved disciples, bowing before him. Their sight made the Guru fresh and happy. Now, thorns from his feet and clothes were removed by them. Mani Singh placed the Guru on his back and took him to a close by place and there attended to his bath.

After some time two *Rohilla Pathans* - Ghani Khan and Nabi Khan - the owners of the Garden reached the spot. Let it be noticed that Guru Gobind Singh had purchased horses from them many times. They were moved to tears to find the Guru in such plight. Then and there they decided to serve him and would gladly die with their master if need be. One *Masand* - Gulaba when heard about the Guru's plight arrived there to pay his humble reverence. He even served food to him and his attendants. Soon after, the Tenth Master was taken to a room in the upper storey of Gulaba's house. At this stage, the village was besieged by the imperial force. However, before any search was conducted by them for the Guru, Gobind Singh dressed himself in blue clothes and in this guise he succeeded in escaping with the help of Ghani Khan and Nabi Khan, the two Pathans.

For two days they kept on moving constantly and reached at a quite distance from Machhiwara from where Ghani Khan and Nabi Khan were sent back. They were, of course, rewarded with *Hukamnamas*. All the disciples and followers were asked by the Guru to acknowledge their sincere service and show them reverence. After this, the Guru proceeded and reached Alamgir Village. There *Bhai* Mani Singh's brother met the Guru and presented him a beautiful horse which Guru Gobind Singh accepted. Now, he resumed his journey on the horse back. The Guru met one *Rajput* convert - Rai Kalla. Tears rolled down from his eyes and so strong was his sentiment that he would not allow the Guru to go further unless he visited his house and took his meal there. The Guru acceded to his request.

At night, Mahi, a messenger was sent to Sirhind, of course at Guru's instance, to bring information about Guru's family as well as his followers and disciples. Mahi came back next day with the news that one Gangu *Brahman*, escorting *Mata* Gujri to his own village, *Sahebzadas* Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh were also with her. They stayed that night with Gangu, who kept their all belongings including jewellery and placed them in the hands of the Muslim authorities who sent them to Wazir Khan - *Subah* of Sirhind. Wazir Khan did not bother for the ages of the two boys, offered them option of the *Kalima* or the sword. In other words, they were asked either to embrace Islam or face death. They preferred the second one. They were subjected to several tortures and finally the children were ordered to be bricked alive. When the wall reached their waists both were again asked to embrace Islam so that their lives might be spared. But they refused to yield, instead they observed that they were the sons of Guru Gobind Singh; death could not frighten them? They must die in order that the wrongs of *Aryavarta* might be avenged. It is believed that *Nawab* Sher Mohammad Khan of Malerkotla intervened for these boys; but Sucha Nand *Khatri*, however, didn't favour sparing their lives. He was the minister of the *Nawab* of Sirhind. He considered these boys very dangerous and wanted to remove them forever. Wazir Khan, *Nawab* of Sirhind, gladly accepted his suggestion and nodded to the public executioner. The latter at once, obeyed the order. Finally in the presence of a very huge crowd their heads were cut off. When the news of this brute crime reached *Mata* Gujri, she was shocked to such an extent that she passed away. In fact, she threw herself out of the window of the dark underground cell and falling on the ground below died at once. The disciples were highly shocked with grief. Their deep sorrows were heard throughout the soil. The people realised that the day of retribution was not far off.

After staying for a few days with Rai Kalla, the Guru left him and started travelling from village to village in Malwa region. The Guru met grand sons of Bhai Jodha who had assisted the Sixth Master in obtaining victory over two Mughal Commanders - Lal Beg Khan and Karm Khan at Guru Sar battle. It was at Deena that Lakhmir, Samir and Takht Mal came to pay their reverence to Guru Gobind Singh and served him and his associates with dedication. It was because of their devotion, sincerity and love, that the Guru prolonged his stay there. Most of the time he spent in preaching God's words to them and in advocating the principles of brotherhood as well as sacrifice. Here, Guru Gobind Singh's sermons imbued with heavenly emotion, his tale of the heroic deeds of the Sikhs during Anandpur siege, his description to the sad demise of *Sahebzadas* Ajit Singh and Jujhar Singh and to the courageous manner in which *Sahebzadas* Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh met their end at Sirhind were heard with the deepest concentration and concern. All who heard him were stirred.

When the Guru was staying at Deena, a large number of his followers started visiting him and many stayed there as well. To notice this, Wazir Khan of Sirhind was frightened. Soon Khan's messenger with a *'Parwana'* arrived there. In it, Wazir Khan charged Lakhmir and Samir with providing shelter to Guru Gobind Singh - a foe of the Mughal Emperor (As claimed by Wazir Khan). They were also threatened with serious punishment if they did not at once hand him over to the authorities. But they sent back the messenger with the reply that they had not committed any error in serving their master - who was primarily a man of God - and that instead of delivering him to his foe they would sacrifice everything they had and even their lives for their master, when need arose.

Noticing that the time was not very far off when a fresh battle would have to be fought with Wazir Khan - Guru's old foe. Now, the Guru issued a proclamation calling upon all those followers and disciples, who could take to the battle field, to come and enlist in his army which the Guru was raising. In a few days a large number of *Jats* of Brars came and offered their services. Hence, the Guru could have a regular force again, which could serve him in the times to come.

At this time, Guru Gobind Singh wrote a letter, popularly known as *'Zafarnama'* to Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb. In it he narrated the factors under which instigated by his subordinate, the *Raja* of Bilaspur and also other hill-chiefs, he had waged an unprovoked war against him, causing heaviest possible loss of life and resulting no good to the Empire. To have an advantage over him the meanest acts had been resorted to and even oaths on the *Quran* had not been respected. In this letter, the Guru questioned the emperor, 'Does he think that the Almighty would leave wrong-doors unpunished?" He also stated that the basic mission of his predecessors as well as of his own was that of peace. None of the Sikh Gurus had any ambition for obtaining temporal power over men and land. Guru's only purpose was to instil the fear of the Almighty into men's minds and to tell them the merits of righteous living. However, the Emperor as well as his officers would not rest until law-abiding people, driven to dejection, took up arms and put an end to his unjust and wicked rule. This was because they were highly blinded by prejudice and worldly power.

7. Guru's Last Phase

When Guru Gobind Singh was travelling in Malwa region one Sodhi Kaul, Prithi Rai's descendent, came to meet the Guru. At this, the Guru realised that the blue dress he had been using no longer served any meaningful purpose. As a consequence, when he was presented a white dress, the Guru at once cast off his blue dress and even torn it into pieces. When he was asked to explain this act, he replied that the blue clothes were the symbolic representation of Islamic impact. The founder Guru *Baba* Nanak had blessed invader Babar with the rule of *Hindustan* for seven generations. Now, the said specified period was coming to an end and in tearing his blue dress he was only making this announcement. But this time, the Mughal had made themselves criminal and really deserved divine punishment. The interests and welfare of humanity demanded that the authority and government, which had become absolute, be snatched from them.

In this region there was an influential *Jat*, named Chaudhri Kapura. He had 100 villages in his possession. The Guru's disciple Pyara Dharam Singh approached him on behalf of his master and asked him to allow the occupation of his one fortified village of Kot Kapura, but the man did not oblige because he could not understand the logic behind the request and also reasonableness of offering further resistance to the Mughal high-handedness and arms as well. Perhaps he had this feeling that if he permitted the Guru to occupy the fortress and stay in the small village like Kot Kapura that would be considered a revolt against the authority of the Mughal Emperor. Moreover, *Chaudhary* had a stake in that area and also had a huge property which he did not like to lose and meet death at the cruel hands of a executioner. As a result of his refusal, the Sikhs were annoyed. The man left the assembly in disgrace and, curiously enough, as luck would have it, the *Chaudhary* was executed, not long after by Isa Khan's order, who was a neighbouring Muslim *Rajput*. In fact, they had not been having good relations. After it, Kapura's son Sukhiya and also grandson Hamira went to the Guru; they tendered an apology for the error committed by their elder Kapura *Chaudhary*. Even they offered themselves to be baptised. For this humble act, Hamira was blessed that his descendants would rule that region of the country. Ultimately, the family which ruled Faridkot state was the descendant of the said Hamira.

Sodhi Kaul didn't tolerate and like that the baptised *Jats* should be highly honoured by the Guru and his followers. He, therefore, decided to get his grandson baptised. He held, when a Sodhi was baptised, he would receive a far superior rank as well as highest possible honour in the eyes of the Sikhs. He, finally, promoted Abhai Chand - his grandson to be baptised to the new Faith. Now, Abhai Chand became Abhai Singh. He always posed as a Guru and constantly started giving trouble to the Sikhs on account of his extreme greed, selfishness and ego.

All those Sikhs of *Majha* who had deserted the Guru at Anandpur and even disowned him were equally disowned and disliked by their own people, on their return home. At home they were rebuked by their wives. They were asked to wear female attire and stay at home, while they would go and fight for the Guru and the Sikhs as well. This way, they not only realised their folly; but also decided to go to the Guru and seek for a reconciliation with Guru Gobind Singh. Ultimately forty of them left for Malwa to have a meeting with the Guru and to tender an apology for their insolence.

At this time, the Guru's armed men lay encamped in the outskirts of woods. Noticing the imperial forces marching towards the Guru's camp from a distance they entrenched themselves behind a bunch of trees that stood around a small pool of water and resolved firmly to lay-down their lives for the sake of their master and the *Panth*. When the enemy force reached within shot, arrows and bullets from the grove checked their progress. The enemy force got confused and thought that it was a mass of the Sikh force, they could not dare to approach near enough. But after some time they gathered courage to come to close quarters. However, the brave band of the Sikhs fought bravely, and though their number was very small, they inflicted heavy losses on the enemy and left deep imprint of their courage and boldness on their enemies that the latter acknowledged their bravery and skill of fighting.

It will not be out of place if this episode is cited here that the heat was intense and the region was without water. Both men and animal throbbed for breath; but soon the look of the sky changed and within no time wind started blowing in the face of the invaders. Clouds of sand rose high in the air and appeared to be determined on burying the plundering hosts alive. The sky was darkened and not a soul could be distinguished. Fearing complete rout, the *Subah* of Sirhind ordered a retreat without facing the main body of the Guru's force. We can not get another example of such valour and courage with which these forty men showed in resisting the advance of thousands of disciplined warriors in an open ground, wanting even in a pretence of defence. The "forty saved ones" are remembered by all the Sikh devotees even today. The story is pitifully told that after the retreat of the imperial force the Guru himself visited the place of action. Among the huge number of slain, the Guru recognised his disciples. He lifted them one by one and placed their heads on his lap, he too wiped their faces with his handkerchief, kissed them, calling them by their names and praising them for their unmatched valour; as if they were alive and were listening to his loving remonstrances.

One Mahan Singh, who was yet alive, when found him in Guru's lap his joy knew no bounds. The Guru also was equally filled with joy at the opportunity thus afforded of exchanging a few words with one of his devoted band of heroes. The Guru asked him if he had a desire to be fulfilled. "*Tutti Gahndo*" (Unite the broken tie) was his reply. He trusted the Guru to be the man of God, who was most high and just. As the God pardons remorseful sinners, he prayed that the Guru should also forget and forgive him and his other fellows for their having left him at Anandpur. The Guru was moved to tears. Immediately he took out the '*Bedawa*' from his pocket and tore the same into pieces, hence convincing the dying disciple that he and all of his associates, who had once abandoned him, were pardoned. Tears of joy now rolled down from Mahan Singh's eyes and he breathed his last in Guru's lap. The place, therefore, thereafter was named and remembered as *Muktsar* (Salvation tank or place). Also it has become one of the major and prominent places of the Sikh's pilgrimage.

Till Guru Gobind Singh was at Anandpur it was never felt essential to pay the Sikhs as well as other disciples for service they rendered. Even those (Men and women) who hailed from higher and respectful section of the society willingly and gladly performed even the smallest duties in their master's household. The moment war was declared against him, they ran to him, armed and equipped at their own expense. They, too, provided with them sufficient stores and ammunition for their own use. However, Guru Gobind Singh was persuaded and finally forced to leave Anandpur for Malwa. The uncertainty of Guru's movement made it difficult for the disciples to make themselves available to the Guru. As a consequence, Guru Gobind Singh depended mostly on the *Jats* and other Sikh followers of the Malwa region. When he felt the need to raise army there to resist the progress of the Mughal forces under Wazir Khan of Sirhind, he had, for the first time started the practice of paid service.

Guru's sources, however, at that time were not sufficient. So, the salary of the men in service fell in arrears. As a result, they became violent and stubborn. However, the situation remained under control as a disciple from the North-West frontier arrived in time with sufficient wealth (Gold and silver coins) and the troops were at once paid their dues. The trouble being hence over; but the Guru immediately disbanded the troops. Now, the Guru was having a very small number of disciples who, in fact, formed a volunteer force. Dan Singh was its leader. He was a devoted follower of the Tenth Master and hailed from neighbouring village Kot Bhai in the Ferozepur district.

It is really noteworthy to state that one Muslim *Faqir*, Syad Whami, prominent in that region was baptised to the Sikh-faith. He was named Ajmer Singh which is frequently mentioned in the Sikh records. We come to know from this record that he was one of those who accompanied the Guru to Deccan. He rendered remarkable service to Guru Gobind Singh. Such conversions were though very few, but sufficiently established to prove that Muslims, too, were taken into the Sikh fold and they enjoyed the same status and other privileges as possessed by converts from amongst the Hindus. Hence, it serves as an example of the Guru's broad-mindedness as well as pious character. It also establishes that Sikhism is a proselytizing creed. It can accept any one in its fold.

Despite the General belief that the then Government was against the Sikh Guru, he continued his preachings to obtain supporters from the influential landowners and *Jagirdars* of the Malwa region. Rai Dalla of Talwandi Sabo was the most prominent who placed all of his resources at Guru's disposal. He became an enthusiastic and loyal champion of his cause. Wazir Khan was alarmed to see the constant increasing fame of

Guru Gobind Singh. He therefore, threatened Rai Dalla with dire consequence if he did not stop harbouring the Guru who was a foe of Mughal authorities. However, without fearing Rai replied that Guru Gobind Singh was his spiritual master to whom he was bound by most pious ties and that for no consideration he would be party to any plan that aimed at harassing him. Having such reply Wazir Khan lost his wits and in anger he approached the Mughal Emperor for help so that he could subdue the Sikh Guru as well as the stubborn *Jats* who had taken up the Guru's cause.

We have earlier noticed that the Guru's wives - Sundri and Sahib Kaur were taken to Delhi in male attire at the time when bloody battle was being fought on the banks of Sirsa. Both remained unaware about the happenings which had taken place afterwards. One day, when the Guru was sharing the hospitality of Rai Dalla, both of them arrived to join their master. Naturally it was a very rejoicing get-together, but when they came to know about the martyrdom of the four *Sahebzadas* and also the sad demise of *Mata* Gujri, they were not only shocked, but fell unconscious. A huge gathering of Sikh ladies and men who were present there to pay their reverence to them were moved and filled with grief. The grief of the bereaved mothers, when they regained consciousness, drew tears from the eyes of the whole assembly. Now Guru Gobind Singh, who was sitting calm and serene, told them words of comfort and solace and pacified them. He told them that their sons were really not dead as they had sacrificed themselves for a noble and pious cause and will always remain alive for all the times.

Guru Gobind Singh had really powerful memory. It was, in fact, retentive and its example can be seen in his compiling the whole of *'Adi Granth'* simply from his memory. In this connection the story runs like this that the Guru asked Baba Dhirmal for the original *Granth* which was in his possession. However, Dhirmal did not accede to his request; instead he taunted that when he was so much proud of his talent, it was not difficult for such a talented person to have a *Granth* of his own. The Guru's greatness was that he did not mind his words; rather finding himself free from the worries and anxieties of war, the Guru not only decided, but actually reproduced the whole volume from his retentive memory.

When the letter *(Zafarnama)* about which we have referred to in the previous pages, was delivered to the Mughal Emperor by Pyara Daya Singh in person, the Emperor was highly impressed by the manner and behaviour of Daya Singh. He was equally impressed by the ability, pathos, the contents of the writing displayed. Of course, Aurangzeb was a bigot, yet he felt convinced that his officials in the Punjab at the instigation of the hill chieftains had meaninglessly involved themselves into a conflict with the Guru and had committed unrestrained excesses and atrocities which, in fact, provoked opposition. And, this conflict had resulted in so much loss of life. As a result of the impact of the Guru's letter, Aurangzeb sent clear and absolute orders to the *Subas* in Punjab to stop harassing the Guru any more and allow him to live wherever he wanted.

Also, the Mughal Emperor, in reply to Wazir Khan's request for further reinforcements to punish the *Jats* of Malwa, who had taken up the cause of the Sikh Guru, rebuked Wazir Khan and asked for his explanation why he had helped the hill *Rajas* in their attempts to suppress the rising religious power and influence of the Sikh Guru. The emperor charged him that he was responsible for the growing popular opposition to his rule in that part of the country. It is believed that he sent a messenger to the Guru asking him to visit the Emperor so that he might have an opportunity of making amends for what had happened. The Guru without any fear accepted the invitation; though his several disciples warned him for placing any trust on the staunch treacherous old emperor. Now the Guru sent the ladies to Delhi, again Guru, at once, with a few followers left for the Deccan where the Mughal Emperor was then involved in suppressing disturbances and upsurges.

The Guru was still on his way to Deccan when he was given the news of the demise of Aurangzeb. But the Guru continued his journey. He wanted to visit *Rajas*than where he desired to preach his principles. He considered *Rajput*ana as the land of heroes. However, he had hardly set his foot on the *Rajas*than soil when Prince Muazzam's message was delivered to the Guru. This led to a change of his plans. In the absence of the law of succession, it had become a practice with the Mughal Princes, after the death of ruling emperor; to have a war of succession and then to decide who would be the next Emperor. This time, Prince Azam, with the help of army, had proclaimed himself Emperor. On the other hand. Prince Muazzam, who was at that time in Kabul, being the eldest son, assumed royal honours, and under the title of Bahadur Shah, advanced to Delhi to contest the throne.

Prince Muazzam had actually sent *Diwan* Nand Lal, his minister to the Tenth Master requesting him for help in achieving his goal. We are aware that Nand Lal was one of the favourites of the Guru. Muazzam's mission was, therefore, successful. The Guru assured him of his sympathy and at once issued instructions to his disciples in the Punjab and the North-West frontier region summoning them to Agra. In response, the Sikhs mustered the force and Pyara Daya Singh was made their commander. When finally battle was fought, the Sikhs fought with valour; even Prince Azam was killed by Guru's arrow, it is said by some scholars. Soon after, his men fled away. At a *Darbar*, held next day in Agra fort Bahadur Shah was duly proclaimed Mughal Emperor. All men of might and influence presented *nazar* to the new ruler on this occasion. Bahadur Shah took advantage of that opportunity to acknowledge, in public, his gratefulness to Guru Gobind Singh. The Sikh officers received rich rewards for the services they had rendered. After this ceremony. Bahadur Shah took leave of the Guru and left for Delhi. Before leaving for Delhi, he appointed an official who remained in attendance on to the Guru.

According to Khafi Khan "at the time Bahadur Shah marched towards Hyderabad the chief Guru of this sect (Sikh) came to join him with two or three hundred horsemen." However, Khafi Khan does not say any thing about the Guru's purpose in joining Bahadur Shah. But keeping all happenings in mind one realises strongly persuaded to trust in the Sikh version of the affair and to consider the attention of the new Emperor as an expression of a feeling of gratitude or, what is not very unlikely, Bahadur Shah might have been inspired by the ordinary dictates of policing in honouring the Tenth Master, as he did, and kept him in close touch with himself; for a mighty enemy, removed from his spheres of influence, becomes quite harmless, in the nature of things. After leaving Agra, he passed through Mathura, Brindaban and Gokal, places of religious as well as historical significance, Guru Gobind Singh reached Delhi. He stayed in the vast ground of Moti Bagh. Bahadur Shah was attentive in his concentration to the Guru.

Finding the new emperor firmly established on the throne, the Guru asked him to pacify his non-Muslim subjects by leaving the anti-non-Muslim religious policy. He also asked him to instruct his *subahs* and other officials in different parts of the empire to stop inflicting atrocities and high-handedness which had provoked rebellion all around. But Bahadur Shah did not comply with such suggestions as he still did not find himself in strong and comfortable position. He, therefore, did not do anything in this direction. It appears that Guru must have felt annoyed, when he found the Emperor indifferent to his desire. However, Bahadur Shah succeeded in keeping the Guru in good humour.

After restoring law and order in Delhi, the Emperor decided to go to *Rajputana* to crush the *Rajputs'* revolts in Jaipur and Marwar. When the

Emperor was busy in this campaign, the Guru decided to go to Nanded; a very small town on the river *Godawari*. A few scholars believe that Guru Gobind Singh opened communications with the *Marathas*, when he was in the South; but, in reality, there is no evidence on record to prove it. There is every possibility that the latter's relations with the Mughal Emperor might have suggested to the Guru following of peaceful ways for the betterment of his people and not to have any relations with such people who were in open revolt against the Mughals; or he might have calmly lived among the *Marathas* with a view to establishing good relations with them so that he might depend upon them in time of need. However, he did not live long. He therefore, did not raise a force there for service in the Punjab. The Guru converted Banda Bairagi who is popularly known as Banda in Punjab history, who more than outweighed the merits of a possible friendship with the *Marathas* or the *Rajputs*.

Soon after, Guru Gobind Singh's end approached. One day the Guru was delivering sermons on God's love for humanity, irrespective of any thing. The Guru also criticised the creeds which legalised persecution of the people of different religions. During this assembly a fanatic *Pathan* stabbed the Guru. At once, the wound was stitched and within a few months he could move about and attend to his routine work. Unfortunately, before the wound was completely healed and cured, the Guru one day stretched a huge bow; as a consequence the stitches broke apart and blood flowed profusely. Soon, the Guru felt that his end was approaching. He summoned his disciples and followers and asked them to consider the doctrine enshrined in the '*Granth Sahib*' as their Guru, in future. He also instructed them to submit all the other matters to an assembly of five representative elders and also abide by their decision. The Guru also preached that they should only worship the Almighty - who was the Lord of Lords and to lead a pious and meaningful life. Hence, he strengthened the belief of his followers and associates in the doctrines of his creed and urging them to welcome all calamities with endurance.

Guru Gobind Singh, the Saviour of humanity passed away at the young age of 42 years, in 1708 A.D. He left this universe at midnight of 5th *Kartik (Sudi), Smavat* 1765. Guru's body was finally cremated and the ashes were buried at a place. There now stands *Hazur Sahib Gurudwara*, at Nanded. This small town is situated in the *Nizam* of Hyderabad's territory. This *Gurudwara* was maintained and run mainly on the income of a *Jagir* from the *Nizam's* Government.

However, different and contradicting accounts are given about the manner in which the Tenth Master met with his final end. According to Khafi Khan, Guru died from the wounds of a dagger and his assassin was not discovered; Whereas the author of *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*, writes that "the loss of his children *(Sahebzadas)* affected him so deeply that he shortly after died of grief." However, the scholars of Sikh chronicles, on the other hand, hold that their Guru never died, instead he passed away. No sooner he seated himself on the funeral pyre and was subsequently seen riding his favourite war horse. There are some others who believe that he had two *Pathans* in his service who were filled with a feeling of revenge, because their father had been killed in a battle by the Guru; they stole one night into his camp and stabbed the Guru when he was asleep. Some of the scholars believe that the Guru himself had provoked them, by saying that those who didn't avenge their father's death were cowards. This statement is nothing but merely attributing to him the thoughts of a suicide, which does not appear to be true at all. Yet there is another view that the Guru was removed by the secret agents of the then Mughal Emperor. They understand that though the Emperor was outwardly friendly, but secretly conspired to get rid of the Guru whom he considered his mighty foe. This statement completely accords with the admitted bloodthirsty instincts of the later Mughal Emperors. It was really a fact, when Bahadur Shah got a news of the fall of Sirhind, Samana and Mustafabad, the Emperor suspended operations in the South and immediately led an army in person to suppress the revolt of the Sikhs. Bahadur Shah might have been under the impression that Banda Bahadur was fighting under the Guru's instructions. It does not, therefore, require any evidence to think or believe that the killer who put an end to Guru's earthly life was an agent of the Mughal Emperor, Bahadur Shah.

8. Guru's Personality

Undoubtedly, Guru Gobind Singh died at the age of forty two, when he had hardly attained ripe manhood. We have also noticed that the later part of his life was mostly taken up by wars which had been inspired by religious and social reformation. However, his basic mission was to see to the harmonious development of his people through absolutely peaceful means and ways. The Guru thought that if his people worshipped one 'True God' and gave up all prejudices and mutual jealousies and learnt to be loving and sacrificing for noble cause, the question of their regeneration would solve itself. He, however, soon realised that it was essential to arm his people in self-defence. Guru Gobind Singh started his work with vigour at Anandpur - territory of the hill-*Rajas*, who were not simple and conservatives, rather they had got accustomed to socio-religious as well as political slavery from time immemorial. At first, the hill-*Rajas* considered their people as a hatred crowd; but after some time when their eyes were opened and they noticed the merest worst of society regarding themselves lions as well as equally superior. The hill-*Rajas* were extremely unhappy to see the activities of the Sikhs. They noticed their prejudices; they also held that their time-honoured caste system was seriously threatened by the Sikhs and they had set at naught their (hill-*Rajas*) authority; the latter had been regarding them quite inferior and always kept them under their sway. Their ego was hurt. Now, they invented reasons to resort to war against the Guru and his people. However, it is noteworthy to state that their threats and fears and military expeditions against the Guru lent increased valour to the new movement. Now, the Guru firmly held that the religion of that time was not fit for infusing strength and lease of fresh life into the sluggish people who were living in his country. Its various creeds; its numberless gods and several objects of worship had misled the masses and removed them from the worship of the one great Almighty who alone was the source of all good. This revolt against the God was at the root of all evil. Elasticity had completely disappeared in the Hindu society. With this liberty of awareness and expansive morality were not known to Hindus. Their complicated and complex philosophy and the self praise had fully failed to generate attachment among the fellow-beings. Every one lived for himself and had become selfish and morally corrupt. Unity, feeling of brotherhood and collectiveness were not known to them. Even the scriptures had been so changed and interpreted in such a way as to make the largest number of Indians believe that the best thing they could do was to obey and serve the priests and hence to obtain salvation in life time and even life to come. Hence, a large number of the Indians were kept ignorant by their own leaders who claimed all knowledge as their own province; but in fact, they themselves were living in complete ignorance that this act would not only deprive the people of eternal, intellectual, spiritual and political merits and awareness, rather their acts would lead them to their own decline.

Guru Gobind Singh being a man of God was fully convinced that no priest ridden people had ever developed into a nation. His struggle, for freedom was naturally a struggle for freedom of the intellect from the chains of religious ideas and dogmas. The Guru was clear that only through aware-darkness of ignorance, of religious prejudices, a hatred of fellow creatures could be removed. He in very simple and straight words told the people "They are all sons of one sole God and bound to fulfil and execute one sole law here, on earth, that each of them is bound to live not for himself but for others". The Tenth Master made his people fully aware of this reality that the purpose of existence was not to be more happy but to make ourselves and also others more noble, virtuous and pious. The Guru had fully realised that the country, at that time, needed a new religion of humanity which could embrace all that was fine, true and bright in life. The Guru told the whole humanity that they must live for others and not for themselves only. The Guru gave the lesson, that to live for others and not for one self, is the greatest and real pleasure of each of us as it is our plain and simple duty. The Guru believed that the very end of life was to push onwards ever to a higher state, towards a truer sense of duty for each of us, a purer form of life for our human kind. He emphasised the worship of one true God of Universal brotherhood, of universal equality, and of universal freedom.

The Guru's God is not a Hindu God, nor a Muslim, Jewish nor a Christian God; but there is only one `True God' of the Universe for whom the whole humanity is equal. His God is timeless, formless and shapeless. His God has no bias and prejudice and who here, there and everywhere pervades and appears in the form of Love. In fact, Guru Gobind Singh had come into the world to start the reign of truthfulness and righteousness and to oppress dishonesty, corruption, fraud and atrocity of any form. He, therefore, disregarded the hill-*Rajas*' threats and advocated open rebellion against his conduct.

Guru Gobind Singh publicized the worship of one God; he denounced man-worship as well as the image-worship in strongest possible terms, both in public and in private. In his well-known letter *(Zafarnama)* to the Mughal Emperor - Aurangzeb he wrote that he was a messenger of the Lord of this universe to put down rebellion with God's authority. If there was any enemy, they were the hill-*Rajas* who not only sought the help of the royal authority, but also incited the Muslim officials of the State authority to punish and persecute the Guru. The root cause of the enmity between the hill-*Rajas* and the Guru was the issue of worship of idols. The Guru did not believe in this doctrine of worship whereas the hill-*Rajas* had complete faith in it. This vividly tells why the Tenth Guru denounced all the religious systems and rites which led people astray from the Lord of the Universe and why the master established a new creed, called the *Khalsa Panth*, means new-way. In this new order the Guru invited all without any distinction. It was he who through this new creed united all by the ties of a common brotherhood.

Another noteworthy contribution of the Guru was that he didn't confine religion, culture and education to any particular section of the society as was seen among the Hindus. Hence, no one was deprived of the comfort of the religion, because of his birth in the downtrodden section of the community. He told in simple words that God always helps all those who seek his help. Being the representative of God the Guru always held out a helping hand to the humble, needy and downtrodden. But his this socio-religious service was very short lived. A great and selfless creed that produced saints and converted sparrows into hawks was checked up at the very outset. Its tenets had not yet been put into effect or even spread widely when a prolonged war ensued. As a result, amidst its excitement all else was not remembered. Despite all this, the Guru at the daily *'Sangat'* presented himself and presided over it. There he taught his disciples and other followers the lesson of worshipping the One Great Lord. However, no one could expect that amidst the worries and cares of war the Guru could have given enough attention to his various socio-religious plans and programmes. Probably this could be the reason that he did not leave a complete memoirs of his own. He could not give any fixed code of laws to the followers of the *Panth*; there is every possibility that the Saviour desired to give a free hand to them to frame laws for themselves according to their needs at different times.

Regarding the *Dasam Granth*, some believe that it was written by Guru Gobind Singh himself, but, a great number of scholars don't accept it and believe that it consisted of the literary works of the Guru as well as of some men of letters who used to live at his court. It is also believed that the writings of the Guru and also of other literary men of the court were lost when the Mughal army treacherously attacked the Guru and his followers who were accompanying him, after they had left Anandpur, on the banks of the river Sirsa. In confusion many were killed and several others got scattered. The rest when crossed the said river, a large number of these writings were lost. Later on such manuscripts as were left with some of his disciples and followers were collected and then they named the whole volume - *Dasam Granth* or the *Granth* of the Tenth Master. Thus the only *Granth*, associated with his name does not give a full account of his achievements and contribution. The men who lived with the Guru throughout and worked with him and vividly understood his life's mission passed away without leaving an account of their doings. Their successors were merely inspired by the ideal and feeling of avenging the excesses of the Muslims as a class. Surprisingly it did not strike any one that it was the hill-*Rajas* who had instigated their fanaticism against the Guru and his activities, though these activities were socio-religious only. But scholars with rational approach have not accepted this view. They observe that there were two *Musalmans* who had assisted the Guru to escape safely from the Mughal camp at Machhiwara. The traditional writers who were committed emotionally to the cause of the *Panth* only remembered that the Muslims had been the principal and the sole cause of the Guru's troubles and also for the premature death of his *Sahebzadas*. This was more than sufficient to excite and instigate the worst possible passions of the Sikh Community. Within no time a wave of anti-Muslim feelings spread throughout the Punjab soil, causing large scale destruction and terror and at last removing every sign of the Muslim supremacy in this province. And, the moment this was attained, the ordinary

Sikh mind felt that the *Khalsa* mission was accomplished. Now political matters were given more significance in comparison to the work of reconstruction of the social order of the Sikh community on the just pedestal and the readjustment of their relations with other fellow-beings on humanitarian principles.

We may be proud of our civilization, culture and society but during the period of the Tenth Guru, major portion of our population was deeply sunk in ignorance. The people had become habitual, from time immemorial, to look to the *Brahman* class for guidance in all matters. Even their feelings and convictions were not their own; their ideals were not their own and even their beliefs not their own. At large, they were exploited in all walks of life. It was Guru Gobind Singh who attacked *Brahmanical* supremacy on the one hand, and on the other he spent his whole life in the service of the weaker and oppressed sections of the society. Though the Guru represented the One Lord, he lived for the people, worked for them and even died for them. Not only this, the Guru scarified his whole family as well as uncountable followers and associates for the cause of the *Brahmans*.

Another prominent characteristic of his life was that he had a tear for the miserable and aggrieved and a smile for the bold and fearless spirits struggling to break through the shackles of sin and slavery. Guru Gobind Singh's energies were not confined to one sphere of action; even his sympathies were not restricted to any one section of the society and any particular community. He assisted even the Muslims when they needed his mercy and help. Among the followers of the Guru there were good number of *Musalmans* who were associated with him in his attempts to mend evildoers, and who remained steadfast in their faithfulness to the Guru till his last.

Of course, the Tenth Master created a separate creed; organised his disciples and followers into a separate community with altogether separate symbols and separate ways and beliefs. The Guru was really first and the foremost in taking up the cause of the lowly born Hindus. Hence, he was the first to advocate the doctrine of equality. Again he was the first who taught the lesson of co-operation in facing common danger. In fact, his whole life's work was to punish severely to those who believed that it was obligatory for them to force every one to their own way of thinking in socio-religious matters and that it was an act of advantage, or at least it was no sin or crime to set apart the belongings of those whose creed was distinct. Had the Mughal emperor treated all his subjects alike, the Guru would not have used sword against the oppressors; instead he must have confined himself to purely socio-religious work.

Guru Gobind Singh should not be considered either a politician or a warrior. In fact, he spent all his energies and time on the advancement of his community and scarified every comfort as well as all the gems he had for the peoples' liberties. In reality, Guru Gobind Singh was engaged in a prolonged war during the later part of his life. But he played in this war merely a defensive role. It was not a war of his own seeking. He fought neither for his own community nor for himself. He fought for the Hindus with whom he was not attached by the tie of creed; but because the unjust and cruel rule to which they were subjected, had made a hell, as it were, for them, on this earth. Guru Gobind Singh thought it as his primary duty to protect them. He would have as courageously and bravely resisted the Hindus if they had been the oppressors. Undoubtedly they were politically oppressed. The high-caste Hindus were most provokingly aggressive in socio-religious matters and the Tenth master's whole life was a constant protest against this aggression as well as repression. He exercised his total force in exposing the unjust and wicked social system of the Hindus. Most of his writings, therefore, consist of the most uncompromising criticism of the means and doings of the Hindus religious hierarchy. Hence, it is rightly mentioned in the *'Bachitar Natak'*, the Guru was sent by the Lord to protect the innocent and the weak from repression and to eliminate evil doers. In brief, Guru Gobind Singh's main mission was to rouse and awaken, the fallen humanity. He displayed both through precept and example how this mission could be achieved.

The hill-*Rajput Rajas* left no stone unturned to remove the considerate and liberal Sikhs. In this attempt they even sought the assistance of the Mughal authorities. However, the Guru left a lasting imprint and the death of his *Sahebzadas* and also of his own caused a wave of indignation which spread throughout the soil of the Punjab. He made the Sikhs a great power. They wreaked vengeance on the Muslim tyrants. They finally succeeded in bringing them to the feet of the Sikhs. Thus, the Sikhs kept in tact their valour and prestige against the overwhelming odds of the foe. Finally they attained a position which enjoyed respect and praise even from the keen and loyal supporters of the *Brahmans'* supremacy.

Let us admit this fact that selfishness is the most potent vice that debases humanity and the same was the case during the period under review. It is a fact that man is the greatest and severest enemy of man. All wars, big and small, were the results of selfish motives of an individual or a state. When the evolution of any society is examined closely, it is always found that in all its stages of transformation and development it has had among its builders persons who had more insight into the workings of the human soul and who, with a view to making it as difficult as possible for a man or for a set of men to infringe upon others' rights or to get status and place to which by merit of their attainments they may not be entitled, have framed rules and to ensure obedience to these laws and the authority. One Lord and man has been requisitioned. However, these laws worked smoothly for a very short span and so morally weak is man's nature and so inclined is he to err that constant efforts have had to be made at regular intervals to thwart opposition to such authority and rehabilitate it with additional dignity of some kind or other. In individual cases it had been always easy to take to task men for this disloyalty and disobedience to this kind of laws. However, when people formed collective defence societies, designated as castes, guilds or so forth, and also arrogated to themselves dignities and honours which they were never entitled to, the law makers found it difficult to punish them or hold them responsible before the courts of Justice. This is the reason that the Almighty, from time to time, sends high souled preacher to tell the people the errors of their ways and to guide them how to treat their fellow men in a just way. Thus, whatever the force of their teachings is felt people are comparatively kind and considerate in their dealings with each other.

Guru Gobind Singh proclaimed fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man. His religion was a religion of love of humanity and devotion to the Almighty. Throughout his life the Guru worked for the harmonious progress of his people. If at all he took up the sword it was not to seek and secure a kingdom for himself or for his family or to deprive others of their liberty and just rights. He resisted the hill-*Rajput* Chieftains of the northern Punjab when they provoked the Guru; he too resisted the imperial authorities when it attempted to suppress him and his society altogether and when intervened with his noble mission of setting up the reign of goodwill and peace. In this regard, the Tenth Master stands alone among the world's noblest benefactors and in it lies the peculiarity of his mission, ideals and personality.

Guru Gobind Singh was a true patriot; but his patriotism was of a higher type, not of an aggressive kind. He was a nationalist; but his this virtue was also of different kind. In simple words, the master was an angel in true sense of the term, who was sent down to minister and guide the ignorant and needy; to protect the feeble and defenceless as well as raise the down trodden. The Guru purified all the untouchable including sweepers and allotted them positions side by side with the high caste priests and *kashtriyas* from among the disciples. Because of the impact of Guru's own personality and teachings, the wealthy and the high vied with one another in parting with their wealth, in order that the poor among them might be above want; and the poor, in their turn, rendered willing service and made themselves useful so that their superior should not look down upon them. The whole tone of the community was highly moral. Even the thoughts of the disciples and followers became pure and their lives noble and virtuous. Now they were not living for any lure or fame.

The whole community was highly inspired by the ideals of the Saviour, Guru Gobind Singh. The thoughts of his disciples and followers were pious and their lives simple. They were not attracted by the smiles of royalty and the grants of *jagirs*. They held that life itself was not of any worth if it was not spent in the service of the *Panth*.

It is equally important to state that his community was consisted of men with brave soul and united by ties so noble. Guru Gobind Singh also renounced his own comforts and also the *Gaddi* in order to invest them with power to govern in matters spiritual and temporal. The Guru also set up a council in which men from all classes were included. All sorts of issues were placed before it and its decisions were obeyed with due reverence. This was really a unique commonwealth. It was based on the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity; but though this commonwealth ceased to exist, upwards of a century later, for want of intelligent, farsighted and selfless leaders, the success that it obtained, during its short life, served as an object lesson to every Indian patriot of whatever race or creed and would boast him in most serious and depressed time.

Guru Gobind Singh's life, his multidimensional personality and also teachings possessed an eternal charm. Even the Guru's writings possessed might that would, for all times, infuse spirit even into the cowardly and raised a dead-man into life. His is the greatest instance of piety, fellow-feeling and sacrifice. If we make him our ideal and learn to walk on the track shown by the Tenth Master, we shall become self-dependent and self-respecting. Our faith in the 'Timeless, Formless and Shapeless' One will help us in rating what the world can give at its proper value. Let it be noticed that the greatness as well as nobleness of the world's great epoch makers lay not in their freaks and caprice; but in their ability to understand completely God's laws and in their capacity to make their followers act in conformity with these laws. If we examine in this light, we can say that his mission had been a unique success. It was Guru Gobind Singh who raised the dead and made the sparrows hawks. It was again he who infused life into the feeble masses of the Punjab. Now, his followers and disciples began to believe and display that their Guru had embodied the strength and vigour of a lac and quarter of men in each of them.

Let it be noticed that the Tenth Master never believed in the theory of miracles, rather he openly and firmly discarded it. His greatness lay in his raising millions of men who were hitherto content to be used as movable property and beasts of burden by the high-caste and high-place of their own country, in making them self respecting and self-reliant, in endowing them with iron will and unbending resolution, and in creating in them a capacity to rule themselves and others. To Guru Gobind Singh steel was a sign of might. He considered and remembered God generally as All-steel. He even attributed his success to him. He wanted to make his men as powerful as steel. So far, his men retained this strength of character, they were always found in ascendancy; but when they forgot the ideal fixed for them by their saviour; when they failed to act upon the doctrines given by the Tenth Master; when they submitted to their grosser self and ignored and sacrificed communal interests, they fell and gave place to men lighter in character and more capable of assuming and discharging public duties.

It will not be out of place to state that Guru Gobind Singh was not a mere soldier, instead he was a saint, a soldier and that too with a high mission. He, of course, fought throughout his life, but that too against his own wishes. Pressure of circumstances forced him to take up the sword and fight against the oppressors. However, when the Guru was forced to fight he did not do it half-heartedly. The Guru always kept very high traditions of fighting warfare before him and also his disciples and followers from which he alongwith his men never deviated. Guru Gobind Singh, let it be noticed, fought for the sake of *Dharma* as well as for the protection of religion, moral principles/doctrines and above all the society of Guru Nanak Dev.

Another point worth mentioning is that the *Khalsa* was created by him in order to convert his disciples and followers into saint-soldiers. He had direct relations with the *Sangats* after abolishing the institution of the *masands* which had become corrupt. His purpose was to effect reforms in the interior order of the Sikhs. In his new organisation there was no distinction of caste and creed, low and high. He set up a novel example in the history of religion when he presented himself before the *Panj Pyaras* and asked them to baptise him in the same way as he had baptised them. Guru Gobind Singh was brave, kind-hearted, loving and confiding. He was particular in safeguarding the interests of his people and community. The Guru did not confine his sphere and activities of their spiritual and moral regeneration. He took keen interest in their daily occupations. He joined and led them in their struggle to occupy a position of honour in the land that produced them. People followed his ideas and ideals. They considered him as their spiritual and temporal Lord. They felt convinced that their master was worthy of receiving their unquestioned homage and deep reverence. At large, Guru Gobind Singh was dearer to them than all their worldly belongings and comforts, because they thought that whatever they had, were to be his gifts. They, therefore, always expressed their heartfelt gratitude to the Guru. Even those who did not possess many belongings and comforts were equally beholden to him as they seriously believed that they were his sons and hence embodied in themselves all that was good and honourable.

Further, Guru Gobind Singh was really the embodiment of self-sacrifice and courage. If his followers, regarded it a privilege to lay down their everything at his bidding, there was nothing which he also did not risk for them. How humble and great it was that the Guru washed the feet of his disciples, served them food and, in other ways, made them feel that he was one whose example they could follow. He was not an adored angel whom it was impossible to emulate.

Guru Gobind Singh was the first who firmly resented the title to divinity set up by several great men before him. He was always particular to see that his disciples and followers always looked upon him merely as their spiritual father and moreover their only aim of worship was the Timeless One. The Guru was really humble to acknowledge that his success was due to his devoted disciples and followers. He, therefore, inspired them with confidence in themselves. It was not at all astonishing that Guru Gobind Singh, because of his personality and tenets, succeeded in bringing together men of various castes and creeds under one banner of righteousness and Truth. As a consequence, people forgot their mutual differences and inspired with one feeling of liberating the country from the yoke of the cruel rule and resisted the Mughal authorities. In his programme, the Guru was clear. Undoubtedly, Guru Gobind Singh had a complete hold on his followers and disciples.

Whether in respect of thought or in point of action, Guru Gobind Singh's place in the history of mankind is assured and distinct. The Tenth Master passed away at the young age of forty two when most begin to take life seriously. However, Guru Gobind Singh packed his brief span with work so tremendous and of such high quality that his ranking must be among the best of mankind. His imprint clear and decisive on the situation of his time had not worn off with the passage of time. The image of Guru Gobind Singh is still a great living reality in the country of today. It is still, as ever before, the guiding star of his beloved *Khalsa's* destiny; their mainstay and their guardian angel in times of storm and stress. To the people of this country at large, as also to his immediate followers, the Guru is the apostle of patriotism and militant-nationalism. Moreover, his memory is invariably evoked whenever the country is confronted with some danger. Guru Gobind Singh's humanistic thought, the broadest dimensions even by modern standards, are often cited as a panacea for the serious life with which our culture and civilization are affected.

Guru Gobind Singh was the first and the last man of God who never grew weary of His praises. He ever lived and moved in his omnipresence. Without His loving grace, life was to him a protracted state of agony; and denied his protecting hand, comforts and luxuries were to him like poisonous serpents or the butcher's knife. His various works, among them *'Jap Sahib'* and *'Akal ustat'* especially are everlasting monuments of his homage to the Lord Almighty. In triumph, he was the *Garibnivaz* the patroniser of the downtrodden; in the battlefield destroyer of foes; and in sorrow a 'friend' (sustainer). His faith in *Akal Purakh* never forsook him, howsoever the trial, or heavy the odds.

Guru Gobind Singh was not a recluse wasting away his precious energy and time in cloistered meditation. Such a thing was meaningless to him and entirely foreign to his nature and outside of his life's mission. His interest lay in the theatre of life with all his complex and challenging problems. It was there again that he wished to serve God's cause and too the Guru thought that His cause could best be served. And towards the problem facing his contemporaries, his approach was that of a revolutionary and a firm fighter. Guru Gobind Singh witnessed before himself unfolding panorama of a struggle between the good and the evil and wanted to be an active participant in it with a view to annihilating the force of evil. The will was reinforced by the firm conviction that he had come into the world "charged with the duty to uphold the right in every place and to destroy sin and evil." "O Ye holymen, know it well in your hearts that the only reason I took birth was to see that righteousness may flourish; that the good may live and tyrants be torn out by their roots". (*Bachitar Natak* - cited in Bhagat Lakshman Singh's work). Behind Guru Gobind Singh's mission lay a divine mandate. This task, the Guru believed, had been assigned to him by the Almighty himself who wanted the wicked to be completely destroyed. This was not the first time that God had done so, rather with him it was an established practice that whenever tyranny and oppression became plentiful and widespread the Almighty sent a special emissary to counter and crush them. Rama, Krishna and Durga were among the emissaries who had been divinely commissioned to challenge and destroy the demons of their respective ages. The reason that God felt it necessary to send saviours from time to time was that He himself was Goodness and Truth and was essentially interested in their triumph over evil. Thus, it was the way that the Guru viewed Him, among other things as the mightiest of mighty warriors armed with lethal weapons and addressed him by such names as *Sri Aspan, Sri Asket, Sri Asdhuj, Kharagket and Sarb Loh,* all indicative of his warrior like appearance and qualities as well as his determination to use His unlimited powers for the cause of righteousness.

The revolution which *Dasam Patshah,* Guru Gobind Singh wanted to organise was characterised by him *Dharamyudh.* It was not a fight to protect or promote the interests of a particular sect or creed and hence is to be distinguished from the Christian crusade of Medieval period and the Muslim *Jehad* of the familiar variety. The Guru's *Dharamyudh* was not the religious war in the usual sense of the term. It was a moral war waged for the victory of good over evil, for the triumph of righteousness over atrocities and oppression. His concept in traditional ethical terms was a logos to the goddess Durga's fight with the demons *Mekhasur, Sumbh, Nisumbh,* to Lord Rama's fight with Ravana of Lanka or to Lord Krishna's fight with Kansa of Mathura. It was based on dynamic view of religion which in its essence is a social catalyst. Religion is not simply a private and personal affair absolutely unconcerned with the problems of society. It had also a vital social role to play in human affairs. It must work for a healthy flow of social and collective life and against the evil hampering the smooth and unhindered mainstream of its existence. However, the revolutionary role Guru Gobind Singh visualised for religion was not to be stinted in any way by harnessing to the narrow interests of any particular religious creed or dogma; on the contrary it was to be conducted with a view to the general good of the society.

In the contemporary context which had largely conditioned Guru Gobind Singh's mind, tyranny was identified with the Mughal State. Its Emperor Aurangzeb, at that time, was heavily engaged in converting it into a purely Islamic State *(Darul-Islam* from *Darul-harb)*. The old liberalism of Akbar's time had ever since his death been on the decline and the reactionary forces, gradually gathering strength, found their champion in the person of Alamgir Aurangzeb. The Emperor in his anxiety to rule according to the *Quranic* law as he understood it reduced the non-Muslims, the vast majority of the people, to the degraded position of second rate subjects. The *Jizya* or toll tax which had been completely abolished by the liberal minded Akbar the Great, was reimposed by Aurangzeb in 1666 A.D. He issued orders to the Governors of all his *Subhas* to demolish the schools and temples of the infidels *(Kafirs)* and with utmost urgency put down the teaching and the public practice of these misbelievers" *(Maasir-i-Alamgir)*. These orders were repeated later from time to time, and gradually more and more privileges were taken away and more and more curbs were placed on the non-Muslims. For example, in 1695 "Orders were issued at court and in the provinces that no Hindu except

Rajputs should bear arms or ride elephant's *palkis* or Arab and Iraq horses" *(Maasir-i-Alamgiri)*. To the religious and social restriction were added some economic ones whereby they were practically excluded from significant positions in the state administration. Such bigoted and discriminatory measures of the Mughal Government as absolutely tarnished it's image in the eyes of the bulk of the people who began to look upon their rulers as veritable tyrants. Forcible conversions to Islam were not very large but even a few were sufficient to convince panicked minds that the state was now bent upon massive conversions to its cherished religion. No wonder that rumours were spread around that Aurangzeb every day before his dinner, gathered a *maund* (40 Kg approximately) and a quarter weight of Hindu sacred threads. But this was not all, the empire financially had never been in a sound position. The agricultural classes, upon whom largely the state depended for its revenue, were almost always at the mercy of *Jagirdars* and *Zamindars*. This sorry state of affairs was accentuated during the long period of Aurangzeb's forced absence from the north because the local authorities now could easily carry their exploitive activities to the extreme. The sufferers were the common toiling masses belonging to all religions including Islam.

It was against the tyrannical state that the revolution of Guru Gobind Singh was directed. The local oppressors, undoubtedly, were seriously to blame, but there too the responsibility was that of the state organisation as such. Guru's mission, therefore, was to strike at the Mughal state as a whole. The time when it could hopefully be brought capable of being reformed was now gone. Only the sovereign remedy, that of his destruction, could not save the people from tyranny and persecution. But in thinking so, he was carefully to distinguish between the Muslim people and the Mughal state. The Guru had no grudge and complaint against the Muslim masses and their religion. Rather, they being fellow sufferers in many respects with the common Muslims, deserved and received his sympathy. It is remarkable, that is, a measure of their faith in him and at some critical moments in his life, when his very existence was in danger; some of them voluntarily came to his rescue. Budhu Shah of Sadhaura along with his four sons and a large number of disciples fought for him at Bhangani in 1688 A.D. Similarly, Nabi Khan and Ghani Khan of Machhiwara saved him from falling into the clutches of pursuing enemy troops and likely death.

Force was an essential component of Guru Gobind Singh's concept of revolution against the fast deteriorating Mughal State. His concept of *Dharamyudh* was indeed a blending of two different concepts - *Bhagti* and *Shakti*. The *Bhagti* stood for ethico-spiritual values of live spring from devotion to God and the latter represented strength and ability to face dangers and stern problems. Both of these trends of thought had been discernible in the Sikh movement long before Gobind Singh appeared on the scene. Indeed the *miri-piri* doctrine of Guru Hargobind, based on a harmonious combination of religious and secular functions, was the starting point in the new development which culminated subsequently in the *Dharamyudh* - ideal of Guru Gobind Singh.

However, it was not only part of his heritage that Guru Gobind Singh recognised force as a supreme or ultimate importance of his purpose. His own rating of it was very high. The Guru almost exalted it to the pedestal or religious worship. To his mind force was divine in origin because God as the inflicter of death *(Mahakal)* is constantly making use of it. Moreover, the saviours sent by Him from time to time to extirpate tyrants never hesitated to use force. It was thus not some thing to be despised or shunned but to be venerated and employed for the good of society or to free it from the vicious or the wicked. He helped it as a sacred principle of life as sacred as any thing else, of which there must always be necessitated as long as there are oppressors and tyrants in the world. Arms and weapons being the embodiment of force, he always sang of them if there were so many deities to be worshipped. His *Shasternama* is not simply a description of the different weapons as such, but it is an eloquent depiction almost in lyrical forms of the wondrous powers possessed by each. Some of his finest hymns have been devoted to sword which he pronounced as no different from the God Almighty as the great deliverer of mankind and the real *Durga* who destroyed the demons in the remote past.

Lest force should be misused, Guru Gobind prescribed two conditions for its use: (a) it must be used only in a righteous, like self defence, defence of the weak, the oppressed and the exploited; (b) It should be asked only as a remedy of the last resort. When all the methods have been exhausted, then it is right to unsheathe the sword *(Bachitar Natak)*. In the words of *Prem Sumarag*. "The Singh must never be unarmed, but he should be absolutely humble and polite. However, when he feels that a tyrant is incorrigible and a moral principle is at stake, or when he finds the ruler indifferent to justice, he can use his weapons but only as the last resort.

For the success of the revolution, which he wanted to bring, the Guru had in his mind that the selection of suitable means was the first and the foremost importance. The condition of the Sikh followers at the time of his succession in 1675 A.D. was far from smooth and satisfactory. The terrible and heavy blow of the execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur at Delhi had proved too much for many of them, so that general feeling for despondency appeared to grip their minds. Besides the internal cohesion of the Sikh fraternity had been seriously undermined by the nefarious and centrifugal activities of *masands* and some dissident groups like *Dhirmalias* and *Ramraiyas*. The former taking advantage of the tender years of the eighth Guru Harkrishan and the long absence from the Punjab of Guru Tegh Bahadur - the Ninth Master had become too arrogant and corrupt. Even their behaviour was proving most detrimental to the effectiveness and strength of the central leadership. The latter had become even more harmful. Their rival Gurudoms, their defamatory propaganda against the legitimate line and their collusion with Mughal authorities had already caused a heavy damage to the Sikh movement. It was thus apt that as a prerequisite of success these corroding and fissiparous tendencies would have to be checked and unifying forces strengthened and effective moral boosters employed to remove the feelings of frustration and dismay weighing heavily on the people's minds.

However, all the hurdles, though formidable, were overcome without any difficulty. The institution of *masands* was altogether, hence knocking of the ground from which these degraded missionaries of Sikhism derived their strength. The more wicked among them were made a severe example of as a deterrent to others. The difficulty from the dissidents also slowly disappeared. Ram Rai who had settled down at Dehra Dun repented over his misdeeds and became friendly. *Dhirmalias*, however, refused to shed off their jealousy but they gradually degenerated into a small localised family group well-satisfied with their monopoly of the first recession of the holy `*Adi Granth*'. As for the measures to boost their morals, the Guru introduced institutions, on a regular and permanent basis. In the military art of fighting and use of weapons, the use of a huge drum called *Ranjit-Nagara* (drum of victory) in particular had electrifying effect on the benumbed nerves of his people. The frequency of hunting expeditions in which the Guru displayed great interest from his early years specially his love for the big game such as tigers and bears, injected a new spirit of daring and valour into his followers' hearts. With a similar motive, he gave priority to the vehicle of literature. The Guru engaged a number of poets and *pandits* in the service and caused the most strings stories of the Epics and the *Puranas* to be rendered into the easy language of the common-men. He himself was not an ordinary poet in fact, most of these translations are believed to be either his own works or done under his personal supervision. The *Dasam Granth* bears eloquent testimony to his inimitable virile style and the wide range of his knowledge. His main purpose was to bring out as clearly as possible the exploits of most, if not all, of the ancient heroes and heroines and through them to inspire his own people with ideals of personal heroism and *Dharamyudh*. *Chandi di Var, Krishan Avtar,* and *Ram Avtar* may easily be counted among the finest specimens of his efforts in this regard.

If a proper emotional and intellectual build up was essential for the realization of his dreams, no less was the need of organisation. Perhaps, it was the cure of the whole problem as without a proper organisation the ideal envisaged could not be expected to materialize. He thought long over it and then in 1699 A.D. he created the *Khalsa*. It was, in reality, not a novelty created out of the air but was as every enduring institution is and should be, the culmination of a long process of evolution dating from the time of the founder of the Sikh movement. During its preceding career of about two hundred years the community had already acquired an identity of its own. It was, therefore, not a clean slate on which Guru Gobind Singh was attempting to write. Like a great seer he appreciated the progress made already but at the same time felt its inadequacy as the instrument of the chance he contemplated. The loose threads in the organisation of the community which were still large in number, had to be tightened up and a suitable code of conduct laid down to regulate and conduct individual as well as collective of its members. The creation of the *Khalsa,* thus was an attempt to build-up a close-knit and revolutionary organisation.

However, it was no ordinary organisation with a few set rules and regulations; nor did it have any aura of secrecy about it, which is generally found in the case of revolutionary organisations. Besides, it was a socio-religious order with a political orientation. Its members were told that they were God's very own *(Wahe*-Guru *ji Ka Khalsa)* ever under His fostering care and the victory, if and when gained, would also be His own *(Wahe*-Guru *Ji Ki Fateh)*. Firm faith in God, therefore, was prescribed as the *sin qua non* to their conduct. This was extremely essential to promote the elements of unit and cohesion in their ranks. Worship of any other object or being, besides being nature, would create a tendency of disruption. Rama, Krishna, Durga and other figures of the ancient Hindus' mythology were all worthy of respect for their reputed acts of heroism but their worship as divine incarnations would result in divergence rather than unity. Similarly, the worship of groves, cremation marks and such other things would surely be harmful to the cause of unity. The individual *Khalsa* were further warned against superstitions and rituals which even if they did not affect unity so much, had nonetheless the pernicious effect of ensnaring human minds and hindering quick progress.

But life is organic and does not consist of watertight compartments of different spheres. All its divisions are artificial and have been made for convenience's sake. Otherwise they are all inter-linked and deeply influenced by each other. Naturally, therefore, it was considered imperative that a progress and liberal outlook in religious beliefs and practices must be accompanied by or supplemented with a sound and healthy attitude in social matters or it would not endure for long. The caste system, the major running sore of the Indian society, and the principal impediment in the way of social integration was denounced as before. While being admitted into the new brotherhood, all initiates, whatever their caste or status in the social hierarchy, were made to drink *Amrit* (baptismal nectar) out of the same iron vessel. Significantly, among the first five *Pyaras* (Five beloved ones) selected by the Tenth Master one was a *Jat*, second a *Khatri*, third a washerman, fourth a barber, and fifth a water-carrier. Hence, in the *Khalsa*, there were no high and no low, and all its members were brothers equal in all respects and in every way. Women, too, being important member of the society were entitled to equal rights and were with great pleasure admitted into the order of the *Khalsa*.

Female infanticide was prohibited and any one guilty of it was to be suitably punished. In the sphere of economic activities, dignity of labour, honesty of means of livelihood and contribution of one Tenth of one's earnings to the common pool of the community were enjoined; Parasitism and exploitation were made culpable offences.

The total code underlined above was on psychological ground enforced through a public 'pledge' *(Partigya)* made at a solemn public ceremony called the *Pahul*. Furthermore, it was symbolised by well known five K's - *kes* (uncut hair). *Kangha* (comb), *Kachha* (drawers), *Karrah* (Iron-bangle), and *Kirpan* (sword), all of which were obligatory for every *khalsa*. They were, undoubtedly, objects of utility particularly in warfare (and this may indicate that great care with which the choice was made) but the real importance lay in these being symbols of the same time. For example, *kes* stood for spiritualism and for sober and serene outlook of life; *kangha* for personal hygiene and cleanliness not simply for keeping the hair clean; *kachha* for purity of personal conduct, not merely chastity; *karrah* for pure and honest economic life and submission to the supreme Divine will and *Kirpan* for *Dharamyudh*, heroism and rescue of the weak and the oppressed. The idea of social equality, another essential constituent of the code, symbolised by the uniformity of appearance achieved through the obligatory use of all the said symbols.

The order to the *Khalsa* thus evolved was a society of free and emancipated people suffering from no inhibitions attaching to, or attendant upon their previous religious belief and practices, their previous professions, their castes and families, or their previous deeds. They were, as once, Guru Gobind Singh proclaimed, *Dharamnash*, *kulnash*, and *karamnash*. Their birth place now Anandpur and not the different places they originally came from. Their family was the *Khalsa*, their father Guru Gobind Singh and their mother, Sahib Devan. Their main occupation was fighting, for the righteous cause, *Dharamyudh*, and the only rites they were now to be concerned with were the singing of praises of the lord and the invocation of His aid in their assigned task of fighting against tyranny. They were a body of saints and soldiers charged with the duty of bringing about a revolution. They were heroes who were told that they were unconquerable whatever the odds. To drive home the point, their names were now changed so as to end uniformity in the word 'Singh', thus making lions of humble disciples and raising them with one stroke to a position of equality with the noblest and more warlike class in India." Let it be noticed that, up to that time only the *Rajputs* had borne the exalted title of 'Singh'.

The new measures raised the strength of the Sikhs several fold. They caught the very first day about twenty thousands men and women who took baptism of steel (*Amrit* or *Pahul*) at his hands. This greatly alarmed the hill-chiefs as well as the Mughal authorities. Their sense of alarm was further heightened by stirring address on the occasion in which he made the bold statement: "I shall call myself Gobind Singh if I can make the meek sparrows pounce upon the hawks and fear them: only if one man of my force equal lakh and quarter of the enemy", writes Dr. Ganda Singh ~~in~~ his work: Guru *Gobind Singh*.

Undoubtedly, Guru Gobind Singh suffered heavily. But all this he could bear with perfect calmness of mind. He was a man of unshakable faith in God and in heart of his heart he knew that his work was half complete and he was not the man to leave it half-finished. For the time being, however, or till his military preparation could again be put in trim, he thought it prudent to try the method of diplomacy. He had been told. that the local Mughal authorities had misused the name of their Emperor and like a shrewd man of affairs he wanted to take advantage of this to get his foes penalised by Aurangzeb. He worked hard for it but to no avail, because the Emperor died soon and his successor Bahadur Shah, never sure of himself, always tried to avoid the issue. The diplomatic venture of the Guru took him to the Deccan, where at Nanded he was stabbed to death by a hireling of the Sirhind *Faujdar* Wazir Khan, whom the Guru's direct talks with Aurangzeb had terribly unnerved.

To a superficial observer, Guru Gobind Singh passed away without having accomplished the revolution he had so much set his heart on but a deeper study will reveal that this was not so. By methods which only a genius could comprehend, he had created a nation and after giving it a revolutionary orientation had raised it up in arms against the tyrannical Mughal state. Furthermore, this country has passed through an ordeal of fire his personal leadership. As a consequence, a revolution had been affected in the minds of his people and it was only a matter of time that this should be externalised. The minds had been aroused to a pitch of intensity that it was unlikely that a few reverses would depress or damp/man their spirits.

The last two acts of Guru Gobind Singh - despatch of Banda Singh Bahadur from the Deccan and setting up of the Sikh Commonwealth, constitute the crowning of a career which was even otherwise remarkably glorious. They leave, undoubtedly, about the strength of his determination, even in the last hour of his life, to carry through the revolution. The appointment of Banda Singh Bahadur for the urgent mission of an open attack on Sirhind vividly displays as nothing else does so clearly, that the Guru had then decided to do what earlier, on grounds of discretion he had refrained from. It appears that the close study he had lately or internal rotten condition of the Mughal Government and the receding prospects of any success in his talk with the Emperor, had brought the rebel in him out into the open and fact that Banda was despatched to the Punjab soon after the Guru was fatally wounded should dispel doubts, any about the way the wind of his thoughts was now blowing. Obviously he was thinking that the time to declare an open war against the Mughals had at last arrived.

The second, of course, most notable act i.e. setting up of the Sikh Commonwealth of investiture of the *Khalsa*, though an act of formality, was extremely important for its revolutionary impact. The *Khalsa* as already known, had been created before the close of the century. Ever since that the Guru had been elevating its position higher and higher. On one than more occasion he had accepted the decision of the *Panj Pyaras*, some time against his own better judgement as binding upon himself. In his well known composition *Khalsa Mehma* he had raised the *Khalsa's* position much above that of the Guru. The same fact had dramatically been demonstrated at the time of *Khalsa's* creation when at his own request *Panj Pyaras* administered to him the baptism of steel. And yet it was only when he was about to breathe his last at Nanded that the *Khalsa* was formally invested with sovereignty. The Tenth Master abolished the political authority or line of succession and splitting the institution of *Guruship* into two merged-one spiritual part with the Holy-*Granth* (which he had previously brought up to date) and the other (the secular part) with the *Khalsa*. The two taken together were to constitute the Sikh commonwealth or the *Panth*, and the Guru solemnly assured his people that he would be ever in their midst whenever they assembled in a representative capacity.

The Guru's decision was really noteworthy in two ways. One it finalised that structure of the organisation which was intended to carry through the revolution after him. In this sense, it was at once the completion of the process he had started many years earlier and the foundation of the new endeavour to pull down the edifice of the Mughal Empire. Secondly, it marked the beginning of an experiment in democracy, a unique thing its trial. The only democracies that India had been were left several centuries behind while in Europe Britain was the only nation having a semblance of democracy. A striking feature of Guru Gobind Singh's plan was that the people who were asked to win and then wield power were mostly from the lower sections of the population which were hitherto known as the dregs of the society.

In the foregoing pages, we have had a brief analysis of what Guru Gobind Singh was able to accomplish during his brief span of life. But no estimate of his place in history may be considered complete without mentioning, howsoever, briefly, the powerful impact he made on the subsequent course of the Sikh history and of the country as a whole. Strangely enough, but nevertheless honestly, the Sikh movement instead of suffering any abetment with his exit advanced hence forward with rapid strides bringing into full play all its inherent potentialities. The struggle against the Mughal Empire and also imperialism was intensified and within two years of the Guru's death a national independent state was created in a portion of the Punjab. However, this state set up under Banda Singh's leadership did not last long because the Mughals were yet too powerful for the Sikhs.

It will not be out of place to mention that the driving force behind this quick advance to triumph and sovereignty was Guru Gobind Singh's institution of the Sikh Commonwealth *(Panth)*. It was the effective force of nationalism springing from a common membership of the same corporate entity that led the Sikhs through this prolonged period of ordeal and ultimately to prevail over their enemies from within as well as without the country. Furthermore, the democratic character of this commonwealth enabled the community not only throw-up leadership of the requisite calibre but also to evolve, conformably to their master's ideals, a suitable working constitution, popularly called *Gurmata*. The success with which this unique experiment in republicanism worked during the period of the Sikh struggle with the Mughals and Afghans justifies the great faith that the Tenth Master had reposed in his people.

If Guru Gobind Singh is looked and studied deeply in the wider context or world history, he will be found to stand for a number of important ideas. The first of them is the unity of mankind. All distinctions of creed, caste, colour and sex were declared by him as artificial barriers.

Similarly, all geographical divergencies creating walls between one nation and another were pronounced by him to be man-made. The temple and the mosque are the same; the Hindu worship and the Musalman prayer are the same; all men are the same; it is through error they appear different; the bright and the dark, ugly and the beautiful, the Hindu and Muslims have developed themselves according to the fashions of different countries. "All men have the same eyes; the same ears; the same body; the same build, a compound of earth, air, fire, and water." "*Allah* and *Abbekh* are the same; the *Puranas* and the *Quran* are the same; they are all alike; it is the one God who created all." "Recognise all human beings as members of one single family, whether they are Muslims or *Shias* or *Sunnis*" held the Guru.

Another great idea of Guru Gobind Singh is what he thinks about the religion in society. He admits that its elevating role for the individual and in fact lays no small stress on the significance for such spiritual values as love, faith, truth and purity. But he does not admit that it should begin and end with the individual or that its only social function should be to carry on peaceful propaganda of its essential principles. Such a religion, to say the least, is inadequate on which it mainly rests, proves in actual life too weak or too soft to meet the rival forces of evil. Not often it happens that its peacefulness is misconstrued as submission which is then exploited to the detriment of the whole social system. In a situation like this, religion degenerates into a convenient tool in the hand of the state to befuddle, as with opium the national faculty of the masses. The Guru, therefore, emphasises that if it is to discharge its ministry faithfully and for the good of the society, it must always have a revolutionary social role; that not only it must never have a truck with the antisocial forces, it must also be taken upon itself the positive role of eradicating such forces. As it is not always possible without the aid of force, militarism is inevitably commanded as an essential auxiliary of the revolutionary functions of religion. Naturally, heroism and dexterity in the use of weapons are applauded. But a qualification is added that the use of force must be only a means to the attainment of a righteous cause and even then it should only be the remedy of the last resort. As to what is righteous cause, the stress is laid merely on self defence but also on offence if it is to be employed against the forces of evil.

Another idea which has received considerable emphasis from Guru Gobind Singh is that political authority must always operate on ethical basis. God is the king of kings from whom all worldly kings derive their authority. They are thus bound by the divine mandate to exercise their authority conforming to the principles of equity and justice. In case they fail to do so they lose their divine mandate and earn divine chastisement; but not only that for then the people are also entitled to rise in rebellion and overthrow them.

Here it may also be said that Guru Gobind Singh saw with his own eyes that the people of the Punjab were slaves of prejudices, pride and passion. He put an end to all hazy endless impotent rage and idle dreams of the slow moving persons and the cowards. The Guru had also realised that the caste system hindered the growth of homogenous well-knit class of the people inspired by a common national ideal. In fact, the idea of nationalism had not been yet born in the community. As a consequence, he taught practically the first lesson of nationalism and strong fraternity to the people of Punjab. To this may be added the views of Dr. I.B. Benerjee, who tells that Guru Gobind Singh, therefore, immediately busied himself in putting his house in order and in bringing about a transformation in the ideology of his followers. They were to be fitted to meet the situation with their own unaided strength and the steps the Guru took to achieve the end brought the *Khalsa* into existence. No doubt, the Guru took away from his followers the ancient solace of superstition. The establishment of the Sikh commonwealth was in fact designed to give the Sikhs a distinct national character of opposition to the ways of other people and to keep alive sense of duty and profession of faith.

Undoubtedly, Guru Gobind Singh poured his life into his Sikhs and invested them with his own personality, a tremendous change was effected in the whole of national character. Even those people who had been considered as dregs of humanity were changed as if by magic, into some thing rich and strange. The sweepers, the barbers and confectioners, who had never so much as taught the sword and who for generations had been grovelling as slaves of the so called higher classes, became, under the stimulating leadership of Guru Gobind Singh, who never shrank from fear and who were ready to rush into the jaws of death at the bidding of the Guru. Through the creation of the *Khalsa*, the Guru roused the dormant energies of a vanquished people and filled them with a lofty, though fitful longing, for social freedom and national ascendency. Thus, this institution by virtue of their sense of devotion, spirit of sacrifice, unity and the faith to fight tyranny at all costs, engendered by the Guru, enabled its followers to steer clear their way though religious persecution after Banda's fall and ultimately to rise as a political force in the Punjab.

Religion becomes ineffective when it fails to respond to the demand of the time realised the Guru. As a result, the Tenth Master organised his followers to suit a special purpose. He called in the human energy of the Sikhs from all sides and made it flow in one particular channel only they ceased to be full freeman. He converted the spiritual unity of his followers and disciples into means of worldly success. He dwarfed the unity of a religious sect into an instrument of political advancement. Hence, the Sikhs who had been advancing for centuries to be true men suddenly stopped short and became mere soldiers.

In Guru Gobind Singh, honestly speaking, united the qualities of a religious leader and a warrior. He was a lawgiver in the pulpit, a champion in the field, a king among his *Masands*, a fighter in the society of the *Khalsa*. The prominent trail in his character was that he was a man of God. Therefore, no odds, however heavy, damped his valour and resolve, no personal danger made him shirk his duty, wounds only stirred him to greater exertion. Guru Gobind Singh, of course, ranks with the great saviour of Hinduism. Let it be noticed that the Empire rather than *Islam* was the object of his animosity is shown by his readiness to make use of the services of the *Pathan* mercenaries. In fact, he bore no enmity to any one but was the eternal enemy of tyranny and oppression whatever be their brand and form. It was Guru Gobind Singh, who, to an atmosphere of gloom and utter degradation, brought a message of hope and deliverance and a will to do or die.

First, all the four *Varnas* were levelled down and then nationalism in itself became religion and the result was the creation of a fraternity unique in character. This way, the credit is due to him of having founded a political community of no mean order for he taught the vanquished people how to obtain political ascendency and nation's freedom. Although Guru did not live to see his great ends accomplished yet it is acknowledged by all that conversion of undisciplined *Jats* (given to repine and plunder or to agriculture pursuits) into a body of conquerors and a political co-operations was due entirely to the genius of Guru Gobind Singh. Even the keynote of his vast literature is optimism, freedom from superstition and strong faith in the oneness of God and of all humanity. Moreover, his purpose in creating this literature was to infuse a new spirit among the Sikhs and to steel their hearts against injustice and oppression.

Above all, the Guru was a rare combination of multiple qualities. He was a true *yogi*, a practical leader of men, a mystic, a saint, a military general and a poet. His life and teachings shed a lustre on Indian history. His glorious example infused new spirit in his followers and even today infuses the same in us, for he said, "I will make sparrows tear hawks, then alone may I be called Gobind Singh." He practised secularism, nursed democratic institutions and stood for peace with honour". He was a forerunner of the present leaders and his teachings have, hence, an all time validity and value for us.

Hence, it may be observed that the country is deeply indebted to this great son of the soil of India. He is being counted among the greatest of Indians of all ages. The object he attempted was great and laudable; emancipation of his people from tyranny and persecution; and the means he adopted were such as a comprehensive mind could alone have conceived. To an atmosphere of gloom and degradation, he brought a message of hope and deliverance. His period witnessed the turning of the tide in Sikh History. He changed the physical frames of his Sikhs so as to make them look leonine and their names so as to impress upon them that they were in fact lions. He altered their mode of thinking,. developed new attitudes in them and gave them wider horizons and new aspirations.

In brief, Guru Gobind Singh set them on the road to progress which also led to sovereignty. His impress was great and deep when he was present in flesh and blood; since then this impress has become indelible and permanent. To the country at large, he showed the direction in which alone lay progress. This was the direction of sound religious beliefs, removal of caste-barriers and superstitions, education and healthy heroic traditions. Modern India undeniably owes a heavy debt to the west for the modernising influences operating through her length and breadth but it is not insignificant that the forces transforming her now are almost the same as were actually suggested by Guru Gobind Singh. In the wider world too the Guru has earned a fitting and suitable position and place for himself. He stands for social order free from all kinds of barriers, in which love, equality, justice and freedom constitute the basis of all social relations.

9. An Epilogue

Whether in respect of thought or in point of action, Guru Gobind Singh's place in history is assured and distinctive. He died at the young age of forty two when most of us just begin to take life seriously. But he packed his brief span with work so tremendous and of such high quality that his ranking must be among the best of mankind. His impact; clear and decisive on the contemporary situation had not worn off with the passage of time. His image is still a great living reality in the India of today. It is still, as ever before, the guiding star of his beloved *Khalsa's* destiny, their main stay and their guardian angel in times of storm and stress. To the Indians at large, as also to his immediate followers, he is the apostle of patriotism and militant nationalism and his memory is invariably invoked whenever the country is confronted with danger. His humanistic thought of broadest dimensions even by modern standards, is often cited as a panacea for the serious life with which our civilization is affiliated.

Guru Gobind Singh was first and last man of God who never grew weary of His praises. He ever lived and moved in his Omnipresence, without His loving grace, life was to him a protracted state of agony; and denied His protecting hand comforts and luxuries were to him as if venomous serpents or the butcher's knife. His numerous works, among them *Jaap Sahib* and *Akal Ustat* particularly are everlasting monuments of his homage to the Lord Almighty. In triumph, he was his *Garibniwaz* - patroniser of the lowly; in the battlefield his *ganimal guadz* (destroyer of foes); and in sorrow his *yar* (sustainer). His faith in *Akal Purakh* never forsook him, howsoever, the trial, or heavy the odds.

But he was not a recluse wasting away his precious energy and time in cloistered meditation. Such a thing was meaningless to him and entirely foreign to his nature and outside of the mission of his life. His interest lay in the theatre of life with all its complex and challenging problems. It was there again that he wished to serve his God's cause. It was there again that he thought that His cause could best be served. And, towards the problem facing his contemporaries, his approach was that of revolutionary and a fighter. He witnessed before himself an unfolding panorama of a struggle between the good and the evil and wanted to be an active participant in it with a view to annihilating the force of evil. The desire was reinforced by the firm conviction that he had come into the world "charged with the duty to uphold the right in every place and to destroy sin and evil." "O Ye holymen, know it well in your hearts that the only reason I took birth was to see that righteousness may flourish; that the good may live and tyrants be torn out by their roots" (*Bachittar Natak*).

Behind his mission lay a divine mandate. This task, the Guru believed, had been assigned to him by God Himself who desired the wicked to be destroyed. This was not the first time that God had done so, rather with Him it was an established practice that whenever tyranny and oppression became rife He sent a special emissary to counter and crush them. *Rama*, *Krishan* and *Durga* were among the emissaries who had been divinely commissioned to challenge and destroy the demons of their respective ages. The reason that God felt it necessary to send saviours from time to time was that He Himself was Goodness and Truth and was essentially interested in their triumph over evil. Thus it was that Guru viewed Him, among other things as the mightiest of mighty warriors armed with lethal weapons and addressed him by such names as *Sri Aspan, Sri Asket, Sri Asdhuj, Kharagket* and *Sarb Loh,* all indicative of his warrior like appearance and his determination to use His unlimited powers in the cause of righteousness.

The revolution which Guru Gobind Singh wanted to organise was characterised by him as *Dharamyudh.* It was not a fight to protect or promote the interest of a particular sect or creed and hence is to be distinguished from the Christian crusade of medieval period and the Muslim *Jihad* of the familiar variety. Guru Gobind Singh's *Dharamyudh* was not the religious war in the usual sense of the term. It was a moral war waged for the victory of good over evil, for the triumph of righteousness over tyranny and oppression. His concept in traditional ethical terms was analogous to goddess Durga's fight with the demons *Mekhasur, Sumbh, Nisumbh,* to Lord Rama's fight with Ravana of Lanka or to Lord Krishna's struggle with Kansa. It was based on dynamic view of religion which in its essence is a social catalyst. Religion if not simple, private and personal affair absolutely unconcerned with the problems of society, it has also a vital social role to play in human affairs. It must work for a healthy flow of social or collective life and must be of necessity contend against the evil hampering the smooth and unhindered mainstream of its existence. But the revolutionary role the Guru visualised for religion was not to be stinted in any way by harnessing to the narrow interests of any particular religious creed or dogma; on the contrary it was to be conducted with a view to the general goods of the society.

In the contemporary context which had largely conditioned Guru Gobind Singh's mind, tyranny was identified with the Mughal State. Its head at that time, Aurangzeb, was keenly engaged in converting it into a purely Islamic state. The old liberalism of Akbar's days had ever since his death been on the decline and the reactionary forces, gradually gathering strength, found their champion in the person of Aurangzeb. The ruler, in his anxiety to rule according to the *Quranic* law as he understood it reduced the non-Muslims, the vast majority of the people, to the degraded position of second rate subjects. The *Jizya* or poll tax abolished by the liberal minded Akbar was reimposed in 1666 A.D. He issued orders to the governors of all his provinces "to demolish the schools and temples of the infidels *(Kafirs)* and with utmost urgency put down the teachings and the public practices of these misbelievers" *(Maasir-i-Alamgiri)*. These orders were repeated later on from time to time, and gradually more and more privileges were taken away and more and more curbs placed on the non-Muslims. For instance, in 1695 A.D. orders were issued to the courts and in the provinces that" no Hindu except *Rajputs* should bear arms or ride elephant's *palkis* or *Arab* and *Iraqi* horses" (*Maasir-i-Alamgiri*).

To the religious and social restrictions were added some economic ones whereby they were practically excluded from important positions in the state administration. Such bigoted and discriminatory measures of the Mughal Government as they completely sullied its image in the eyes of the bulk of the people. They began to look upon their rulers as variable tyrants. Forcible conversions to Islam were not very large but even a few were sufficient to convince panicked minds that the state was now bent upon massive conversions to its cherished religion. No wonder that rumours were spread around that the Emperor every day before his dinner, gathered a maund (40 Kg approximately) and a quarter weight of Hindu sacred threads. But this was not all, the Empire financially had never been in a sound position. The agricultural classes, upon whom largely the state depended for its revenue, were almost always at the tender mercies of *jagirdars* and *zamindars*. This sorry state of affairs was accentuated during the long period of Aurangzeb's forced absence from the north because the local authorities now could easily carry their exploitive activities to the extreme. The sufferers were the common toiling masses belonging to all religious including Islam.

It was against this tyrannical state that the revolution of Gobind Singh was directed. The local oppressors no doubt were seriously to blame, but there too the real responsibility was that of the state organisation as such. His aim, therefore, was to strike at the Mughal state as a whole. The time when it could hopefully be thought capable of being reformed was now gone. Only the sovereign remedy of its destruction, could not save the people from tyranny and persecution. But in thinking so the Guru was careful in distinguishing between the Muslim people and the Mughal state. He had no grudge or complaint against the Muslims. Rather, they being fellow sufferers in many respects with the non-Muslims, deserved and received his sympathy. It is remarkable and is a measure of their faith in him that at some critical moments in his life, when his very existence was in danger; some of them voluntarily came to his rescue. Budhu Shah of Sadhaura alongwith his four sons and several hundred disciples fought for him at *Bhangani* in 1688 A.D. Similarly, Nabi Khan and Ghani Khan of *Machhiwara* saved him from falling into the clutches of pursuing enemy troops and likely death.

Force was an essential component of Guru Gobind Singh's concept of revolution against the fast deteriorating Mughal state. His concept of *Dharamyudh* was indeed a blending of two different concepts i.e. *Bhakti and Shakti*. The former stood for ethico-spiritual values of life springing from devotion to God and the latter represented strength and ability to face dangers as well as stern and serious problems. Both of these trends of thought had been discernible in the Sikh movement long before Guru Gobind Singh appeared on the scene. Indeed the *miri-piri* theory of Guru Hargobind based on a harmonious combination of religious and secular function was the starting point in the new development which culminated subsequently in the *Dharamyudh* ideal of Guru Gobind Singh.

But it was not merely a part of his heritage that Guru Gobind Singh recognised force as of supreme importance to his purpose. His own rating of it was very high. He almost exalted it to the pedestal of religious worship. To his mind force was divine in origin because God as the inflicter of death (*Mahakal*) is constantly making use of it. Moreover, the saviours, sent by Him from time to time to extirpate tyrants, never hesitated to use force. It was thus not something to be despised or shunned but to be venerated and employed for the good of society or to free it from the vicious or the wicked. He helped it as a sacred principle of life as sacred as anything else, of which there must always be necessitated as long as there are oppressors and tyrants in the world. Arms and weapons being the embodiment of force, he always sang of them as if they (weapons) were so many deities to be worshipped. His *Shastarnama* is not simply a description of the different weapons as such, but it is an eloquent depiction almost in lyrical forms of the wonderous powers possessed by each. Some of his finest hymns have been devoted to the sword which he pronounced as no different from the God Almighty as the great deliverer of mankind and the real *Durga* who destroyed demons in the remote past.

The Guru prescribed two conditions for its use. One, it must be used only in a righteous manner, such as self-defence, defence of the weak, the oppressed and the exploited. Second, it should be taken only as a remedy of the last resort. "When all the methods have been exhausted, then it is right to unsheathe the sword" (*Bachitar Natak*). In the words of *Prem Sumarg*, "The *Singh* must never be unarmed, but he should be docile as a cow. However, when he feels that a tyrant is incorrigible and a moral principle is at stake, or when he finds the ruler indifferent to justice, he can use his weapons but only as the last resort."

For the success of the revolution the Guru had in mind that the selection of suitable means was the first and foremost importance. The condition of his Sikh followers at the time of his succession in 1675 A.D. was far from happy. The terrible blow of Guru Teg Bahadur's execution at Delhi had proved too much for many of them, and the general feeling for despondency seemed to have gripped their minds. Besides the internal cohesion of the Sikh fraternity had been seriously undermined by the nefarious and centrifugal activities of *masands* and some dissident groups like *Dhirmalias* and *Ramraiyas*. The former taking advantage of the tender years of the Eighth Guru Harkrishan and the long absence from the Punjab of the Ninth Guru Tegh Bahadur, had become arrogant and corrupt and their conduct was proving most detrimental to the effectiveness and strength of the central leadership. The latter had become even more harmful. Their rival Gurudoms, their false propaganda against the legitimate line and their collusion with Mughal rulers had already caused a heavy damage to the Sikh movement. It was thus clear that as a prerequisite of success these corroding and divisive tendencies would have to be checked and unifying forces strengthened and effective moral boosters employed to remove the feelings of frustration and dismay weighing heavily on the people's mind.

However, the hurdles, though formidable, were overcome without much difficulty. The institution of *masand* was altogether, thus knocking of the ground from which these degraded missionaries of Sikhism derived their strength. The more wicked among them were made a severe example as a deterrent to others. The difficulty from the dissidents also gradually disappeared. Ram Rai who had settled at Dehra Dun, repented of his misdeeds and became friendly. *Dhirmalias*, however refused to shed off their jealousy but they gradually degenerated into a small localised family group, well satisfied with their monopoly of the first recension of the holy *Adi Granth*. As for the measures to boost their morals, the Guru introduced institutions, on a regular and permanent basis. In the military art of fighting and use of weapons, the use of huge drum called *Ranjitnagara* (drum of victory) in particular had electrifying effect on the benumbed nerves of his people. The frequency of hunting expeditions in which the Guru showed great interest from his early years specially his love for the big game such as tigers and bears, injected a new spirit of daring and valour into his followers' hearts. With a similar motive, he gave priority to the vehicle of literature. He engaged a host of poets and *pandits* in the service and caused the most strings stories of the Epics and the *Puranas* to be rendered into the easy language of the people. He himself was a great poet. In fact, most of these translations are believed to be either his own works or done under his personal supervision. The *Dasam Granth* bears eloquent testimony to his inimitable virile style and the wide range of his knowledge. His purpose expressly was to bring out as clearly as possible the exploits of most, if not all, of the ancient heroes and heroines and through them to inspire his own people with ideals of personal heroism and *Dharamyudh*. *Chandi di Var, Krishan Avtar and Ram Avtar* may easily be counted among the finest specimens of his efforts in this regard.

In the background of every man's field of activity are the conditions of the contemporary age, and experiences and works of different great men. Guru Gobind Singh also, taking inspiration from the grim conditions of his age, got determined to start a struggle till last against cruelties and inhumanity. He also considered his prime duty to take to the sword against the oppressive *Mughals*, keeping in view the work and sacrifices of the earlier Sikh Gurus. In order to give a practical shape to his ideas, he first of all, while reminding the depressed human race of its religious duty, taught the lesson of self-sacrifice for the defence of the nation.

Thereafter, he produced literature, based on the glorious tales of the past and the prehistoric religious tales of the struggle between the gods and the devils. This literature was fully capable of providing sacred determination of leading a life of self-respect while encouraging to struggle against ignorance, oppression, exploitation and slavery, and finally led to victory.

Guru Gobind Singh's personality was a combination of a saint's delicate outlook and a warrior's iron thoughts. Perhaps that is the reason why, on the one hand, he guided the path of the races with the power of the sword, and on the other, with the power of the pen, he filled the weak and lifeless people with strength. All the poetic works of Guru Gobind Singh are included in the *Dasam Granth* some of them are a combination of prayer and bravery. The *'Japu'*, *'Akal Stuti'* and *'33 Swaye'* reveal the eternal relationship between God and soul and the importance of praying to God with a clean heart. In fact, the Tenth Guru knew it well that in order to sow the seed of racial honour in the Hindus who had surrendered themselves before the vast *Mughal* army it was essential to sing the tales in which everyone had a deep faith. That is the reason why he chose for his poetry the religious tales, prehistoric and historic events, in which there was a close relationship between spirituality and bravery. The struggle between the gods and angles in his works, in fact, represents the struggle between the Hindus and the Muslims.

In this resistance the Sikh religious movement played a pivotal part in the Punjab. As a matter of fact, while resistance was sporadic in other parts of the land, or dynastic and feudal, as in the case of a few *Rajput* clans, the Sikh resistance was inspired with a high sense of mission which the Gurus and their followers felt called to achieve and to fulfil. Hence, this movement acquired certain unique features. In the first place, it had a continuity and a stamina which enabled it to carry on one of the grimmest struggles in the history of man against the most savage tyranny for over three quarters of a century. It was these features which turned the Sikhs not only into steadfast, hardy warriors and martyrs, and established among them something akin to a democracy or federation of clans, but also made the entire Sikh people into an approximation of the idea of a nation at a time when in India people had not yet developed the idea of nationhood, in which the bond of a common soil and commonly held ideals might be the cementing force. In those times people thought at the most in terms of tribal or sect loyalties. This, of course, has not stood in the way of the Sikhs merging themselves into the concerns of the larger Indian nation, as historical forces during the nineteenth century, and after forged the idea of Indian nationhood. But that is another issue.

Guru Gobind Singh greatly stressed the purity and integrity of the Individual life. He had at the same time always set his face against the life of the recluse. He has in numerous places expressed the ideal of the crusader in the path of God - yearning to attain the qualities which go to perfect such a character.

Guru Gobind Singh came to a heritage calling for heroism and vision to infuse the spirit of idealism and patriotism among the people, whom centuries of alien rule had turned supine, and whose reacting to their situation was a gloomy attitude of aloofness. The Hindu, no doubt, had declared the invading Muslim to be on a level of the untouchable of his own society, but that did not conjure away the ugly facts of oppression and tyranny.

This was not the same thing as a general revolt against *Mughal* rule as such. That as a matter of fact, was not in the mind either of Guru Tegh Bahadur or his son Guru Gobind Singh. It was an assertion and a gesture of national honour and self-respect - an act of protest, so to speak, but not a revolt in the ordinary political sense.

That the Guru was preaching resistance to the sate programme of religious persecution is amply borne out by the fact of his arrest on some trumped-up charge and the sentence of torture, execution and quartering passed on him.

The Guru's victory was complete, but evidently he did not covet any territory, and moreover, did not wish to enter into unnecessary further skirmishes and vendetta and counter-vendetta with the hill chiefs. Such battles however, were forced on him later. The points to be elucidated here are mainly two: the causes which prompted the hill chiefs to make concerted and repeated attacks on the Guru, and the Guru's own plan to raise the heroic spirit among the Indian people.

The fight of Guru Gobind Singh was not against Muslims as such, or against Islam. In any case, however, peaceful and broadbased in universal terms Guru Gobind Singh's appeal might be, his fight against *Mughal* persecution was sooner or later bound to arouse the general opposition not only of the Muslim nobility, but also of the Muslim masses.

As stated by himself in *Bachitra Natak* Guru Gobind Singh felt called upon by the Lord to go into the terrestrial world and establish the faith; and further to turn mankind away from senseless practices'. The Mandate of the Lord ran: 'Spread Righteousness and defeat and destroy the wicked and evildoers everywhere.... To spread Righteousness, to uphold men and to uproot the wicked root and branch'

The statement of his life's mission, thus expressed in mythological terms, tells clearly to the overriding idea in the Guru's mind to prepare himself and his followers for a crusade in defence of faith and honour which the *Mughal* overlords, of his day were so ruthlessly attacking, and to end a situation in which a non-Muslim could live only in the most abject servitude. This, of course, does not imply all that a 'political' programme in these times would imply or include, like a revolutionary plan to wrest power and to deprive the occupants of the royal seat of their positions.

The Guru's life-work was much deeper and of a much more lasting character than that of the creator of a revolution, albeit but of his work revolutionary movements and far-reaching consequences affecting the destinies of peoples and nations flow, as did from the work of other founders of faiths. He fixed men's minds on the ideal - the quest for right and truth from which crusading action naturally flowed, ultimately to bring down those in the seats of arrogant and iniquitous powers.

Here, no doubt, accounts of the increasing atrocities of the *Mughal* would reach the Guru. His influence and power were increasing. Out in the plains, the Sikhs were raising material resources to build up the Guru's strength, as testified by some of the '*Hukam-Namahs*' or Command-Epistles of the Guru to the Sikhs, who were called upon from time to time to contribute money and equipment to the community store.

As the Guru was contemplating a crusade against the oppressors of his day, invoking the spirit of sacrifice and heroism, he had to meet opposition from wholly unexpected quarters - the Hill chiefs of the neighbourhood.

To destroy tyranny the Sword must be unsheathed the Sword as the might of India, to strike against the Demons of these later times. Unless the soul of India could be aroused to burn all the tyranny in this mighty flame, there would be no end to her ills. By arousing this spirit alone could the Guru fulfil the Lord's mandate, delivered as stated in '*Bachitra Natak*', to destroy the wicked root and branch.

He is no believer in the mythological and historical goddess as the object of credal worship, who had been carved and moulded in figures and to whom temples has been erected. The

Guru had in diverse places distinctly disavowed any association with *Avatar*-worship, and has in a hundred ways affirmed his imperishable monotheistic faith in the One Eternal Lord of Guru Nanak's conception.

To the Guru the figure of *Durga* is illustrative of that Divine Might which in age after age inspires men of God to battle for faith and truth against the evil forces which are, by an inscrutable law of *God*, perpetually trying to disrupt the divine order, and are as perpetually put down. From his divine poems the Guru's interpretation of the *Durga*-symbol is unambiguously clear. It stands for the Eternal, the Timeless Creator.

The Guru'*s* wide and catholic outlook in matters religious has kept the Sikhs free throughout their history from the taint of such poisonous narrowness and calculated attitude of prejudice against people of other faiths, including the Muslims, as is rarely seen in the history of religion. Guru Gobind Singh's fight was, as in patent to anyone reading the story of his career attentively, not against Muslims, but against tyranny established in places of power. That the strongest and most formidable practitioners of such tyranny were Muslims was an accident of history, handed down from nearly five centuries to the Guru'*s* own age.

The Guru'*s* objective does not appear clearly to have been either to prepare for a revolutionary struggle or to avenge the unjust execution of his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur. He accepted *Mughal* rule as a fact of history, just as he would accept Hindu or any other rule that might happen to be established. Like his predecessors on the throne of Guru*ship*, he usually let political matters be, except that with unerring judgment he felt that new problems were arising, more menacing that ever before. So he not only took himself away from the Muslim seats of state authority, to Anandpur and Paonta, but also gave himself and his followers superb training in arms and the art of war. Out of this background was to grow the *Khalsa*, Order of Devoted Crusaders in the near future. That the Guru's attitude towards the reigning *Mughals* was neither that of a rebel nor a sworn opponent is evident from these lines occurring in the autobiographical *Bachitra Natak*, in the midst of the episode describing an invasion of the hill areas where the Guru was residing, by a *Mughal* force, at a time when for fear of the army of Prince Muazzam, Aurangzeb's heir-apparent, many of the weak-minded among the Sikhs fled the Guru. Still the Guru writes of the *Mughals*.

> "There are two Houses: *Baba* (Guru) Nanak's and, Babar's.
> Both these are ordained by the Lord Himself.
> This one (Nanak's) is leader in faith, while in that one (Babar's) inheres the sovereignty of the earth.
> Those who pay not the Guru's tithe, will perforce be robbed by the *Mughals* of their wealth;
> Will be subjected to heavy torture, and have their house and home plundered."

This implies not only that *Mughal* rule was tyrannical, but also that its tyranny fell heaviest on those who were weak in faith and piety, as by God's will.

It is significant that the Guru's early fight was against Hindu feudal chiefs, anxious to preserve their hegemony and looking upon the Guru as a rival and a promulgator of dangerous and heterodox doctrines. In the first of these fights, the battle of *Bhangani*, a few miles above *Paonta*, the Guru was assisted by the Muslim saint, *Pir* Budhu Shah of Sadhaura, along with his sons and disciples. The *Pir* was later put to death by the viceroy of Sirhand for the crime of assisting the Guru. In the Guru's force were five hundred *Pathan* mercenaries who deserted on the eve of the battle, obviously under the lure of bribe, to the Guru's Hindu opponents. The Guru nevertheless won a great victory, in which four of the principal hill chiefs were killed, and according to the history of Sirmaur (Nahan) state, eight of their *ranis* performed *sati* along with the bodies of their husbands.

When years later the Guru was being pursued by *Mughal* soldiers after the superhuman resistance at Chamkaur, as is well-known, he was given shelter and safety by two Muslims, Nabi Khan and Ghani Khan. They had dealings with the Guru in horses, and obviously looked upon him as a person to be revered and protected. Later still he was sheltered by the Muslim chief of Raikot, named Rai Kallah, in whose family was kept one of the Guru's swords as a proud heirloom.

The Guru's references to the Prophet Muhammad in his compositions are not irreverent. He is mentioned as among the great founders of the religions of mankind, though of course not as the greatest or the only among such teachers, in the manner of the Muslims. Towards the *Koran* and the Muslim religion the references are invariably imbued with the spirit of tolerance and goodwill. The Guru obviously could not subscribe to the view which holds the Islamic Revelation to the last word in Divine Truth.

It was only in his last days of disillusionment about the *Mughals* and their rule that the Guru must have made up his mind to put his course on a system which stood for naked and undiluted tyranny, and brought little good. Out of that spirit must have come his mandate to Banda to proceed to the Punjab and to extirpate the oppressive *Mughal* rule there.

Guru Gobind Singh gave an important place to different religious tales in his poetic works. In order to awaken the dormant Indians and to remind them of their responsibilities towards the motherland, he referred wholeheartedly to the six religious tales relating to *Durga* representing 'power', *Vishnu* representing unlimited power of God, *Brahma* who created the entire world and Rudra Dev the destroyer of the World. Although Guru Gobind Singh was a believer in God's invisible form, yet he accepted the Hindus' belief in the theory of oneness in diversity. God himself who came into form in order to crush oppression, destroy evil tendencies and do good to people. Guru *Sahib*, by producing different tales of God in human forms, described men's ideal actions and moral values. He wanted that the Hindus should get united to crush the oppression and put an end to the cruel Mughal rulers with their bravery and courage exactly in the same way as the gods and goddesses, taking the side of the truth, justice and religion, had destroyed the devils. In order to encourage his followers to participate in the holy war, to destroy the evil and to adopt the good, he created the aforementioned works.

It is significant again that Guru Gobind Singh roused the dormant heroic spirit of the Indian people in the name of *Akal*, *Maha-kal*, *Bhagauti*, *Parma Purukha*, *Kartar* and such other concepts of the creator, all drawn from Indian thought, with Indian overtones and associations. The imagery employed by the Guru, particularly the image of the avenging *Chandi*, the goddess and heroine who in ancient ages protected the Gods against the demons, is the protectress of Indian values, and in the entire context of the invocation of the heroic spirit, her name stands for the dormant spirit of Indian heroism against the aggression of a power professing to serve Islam, seeking to rule over and suppress the Indians as aliens.

By the time Guru Gobind Singh came upon the scene, things had grown even worse. Aurangzeb's court consisted of mere parasites, degenerate aristocrats who had lost the personal chivalry of their forbears, and were a bloated race who even in wartime kept with them swarms of concubines.

Muslim militancy as known throughout history in India was aggression and high-handedness. The Guru wished to inculcate the qualities of martyrs and hero-crusaders (*Dharma-Virs*), among his followers. The Muslims in India could furnish little by way of inspiring the Guru to emulation. The presence of militant Islam in India no doubt led the Guru to draw the sword in what it would be right to call the assertion of national self-respect, visualized as war against evil, but the inspiration towards that came from native Indian sources.

Thus it is through *sadhana* (endeavour), *simran* (*smaran* or meditation), self-discipline and all the self-denial which that may involve, that men are shown the path of saintliness and of ultimate greatness. Out of such endeavour alone comes true leadership, which in the religious sphere is designated by its various grades, such as piety, saintliness, prophethood and ultimately god-hood such as is accorded to men of overwhelming spiritual power among all peoples in those eras when faith has been accorded the supreme place in the lives of men.

Bhai Gurudas Singh, (This man is different from the great poet *Bhai* Gurdas contemporary of the 5th and the 6th Gurus) while eulogizing the great personality and achievements of Guru Gobind Singh in his *Var* (a kind of Ballad-ode) has the refrain of his poem:

> Behold there, manifest the incomparable man,
> the hero unsurpassed!
> Glory be to Gobind Singh, Master-Disciple!

The reference in these words is to the famous incident, that the Guru after administering to the Sikhs the new Baptism of steel, called *Amrit* to Nectar, offered himself before the disciples to be baptized himself. This indeed was a unique and deeply meaningful action, contrary to the usual custom. Nowhere else had it been seen that the founder of a faith had put himself in such a position of humility and bagged of the disciples to confirm him in the faith by giving to him what he has already given them. The significance of this reversal of roles is deep and abiding. The Master not only thereby showed himself to be humble in spirt, truly living the lesson which he and his predecessors had preached now for generations, but demonstrated also his identification with the disciples. The disciple, if he be true in heart and have truly dedicated himself to the Master's mission, is worthy to take his place, and in the Guru's words to meditate on the Name himself and to lead others towards such meditation', or 'their own faces bright with the light divine, they bring salvation to countless others'. It is when the Guru had identified himself with disciples of such devotion and purity that it is just and right for him to change places with them. For, they are truly conditioned and ready to take his place-but only when the disciples be such. As the Gita says, the righteous man's action is 'consumed in the fire of spiritual enlightenment' (*Jnan-agni-dagdha karma*). These disciples, when the Guru made a call for their heads, offered these unhesitatingly, so that they fulfilled Guru Nanak's injunction to 'enter the quarter of love with thy head on the palm of thy hand'. They were 'dead while alive' - dead in the flesh. They had put by all worldly ambition, and through their sacrifice had earned the title of Guru's five beloved ones', who are mentioned in the daily prayer of the Sikhs along with the four martyred sons of the Guru - an honour which with characteristic generosity of soul, Guru Gobind Singh, 'the unique, the mighty' alone could confer on these sons of his spirit, not less dear than the sons of his flesh. Thus is love at the basis of this identification of the Guru with the disciples - and this is the seed of a development which may well be called democracy, equality or by any other political name, but for which all such labels are inadequate, for they lack the dimension of spiritual love, which is the true basis of such relationship.

Such was the conception of the Five about whom Guru Gobind Singh said, to those who took his Baptism of Steel, that wherever five Sikhs would be, he would be present in their midst. This is a matter for the spiritual mystical understanding. A group or gathering is a mere crowd, however large, but inspired by the spirit of God, that is by an ideal, it is an incarnation of something noble, an idea or spirit.

He follows rather effortlessly the dignified personalities and racial values associated with his culture. His only aim was to establish a society which was united and religious minded. It will not be wrong to say that he achieved unprecedented success in it.

If a proper emotional and intellectual build-up was necessary for the realization of his dreams, no less was the need of an organisation. Perhaps, this was the cure of the whole problem as without a proper organisation the ideal envisaged could not be expected to materialize. He thought long over it and then in 1699 A.D, he created the *Khalsa*. It was not a novelty created out of the air but was as every enduring institution is and should be, the culmination of a long process of evolution dating from the time of the founder of the Sikh movement. During its preceding career of about 200 years the community had already acquired an identity of its own. It was, therefore, not a clean slate on which the Tenth Master was attempted to write. Like a great seer he appreciated the progress made already but at the same time realized its inadequacy as the instrument of the chance he contemplated. The loose threads in the organisation of the community which were still large in number, had to be tightened up and a suitable code of conduct laid down to regulate the conduct, individual as well as collective of its members. The creation of the

Khalsa, thus was an attempt to build up a close-knit and revolution oriented organisation.

But it was no ordinary organisation with a few set rules and regulations; nor did it have any aura of secrecy about it, which is generally found in the case of revolutionary organisations. It was, on the other hand, a socio-religious order with a political orientation. Its members were told that they were God's very own (*Wahe* Guru *ji ka Khalsa*) ever under His fostering care and the victory if and when gained, would also be his own (*Wahe* Guru *ji ki Fateh*). Firm faith in God. therefore, was prescribed as the *sin quo non* to their conduct. This was most essential to promote the elements of unity and cohesion in their ranks. Worship of any other object or being, besides being nature, would create a tendency to disruption. Rama, Krishan, Durga and other figures of the ancient Hindu mythology were all worthy of respect for their reputed acts of heroism but their worship as divine incarnations would result in divergence rather than unity. Similarly, the worship of graves, cremation marks and such other things would surely be harmful to the cause of unity. The individual *Khalsa* were further warned against superstitions and rituals which even if they did not affect unity so much, had nonetheless the pernicious effect of ensnaring human minds and hindering quick progress.

Guru Gobind Singh, has also given an expression to the object of his life. He opines that God has sent him to this world to spread a message of religion and to destroy the evil people. However, it does not mean that Guru *Sahib* produced this work for his self expression. On the other hand, he wanted to lift the pal of laziness that had fallen on the Hindus, and give a message of courage and bravery. He himself faced the powerful *Mughal* forces in many different battles and presented before the Hindus an example of his own life. Seeing the cultural values of the race and nation being attacked, he considered it proper to give the immortal message; "Kill the evil forces". Besides, the prayer to different weapons, treating them as gods and goddesses, in '*Shastranamala*' shows that Guru Gobind Singh's main objective was to adapt the feeling of racial struggle in the interest of the nation.

Nation, power, civilization, culture, religion and literature occupy an important place among the elements which reveal the racial honour. These are the elements through which a race maintains its identity. During Guru Gobind Singh's period, there was darkness of pessimism among the Hindus because the oppressive *Mughal* rulers had spread their cruel net in their geographical boundaries and the political activities. The Hindu culture and civilization, caught in this net, was getting disintegrated. The common people, forgetting the real nature of religion, were treating hypocrisy and hollow outer actions as religion. Ignoring the supreme truth, a particular sect was given importance. The uncivilized and cruel rulers were insulting the Hindus' Gods and goddesses. The spirit of national unity, though present in hearts, was in a dormant state. The rulers considered their political success in converting the Hindus into Muslims with sword and building mosques after destroying temples. Guru Gobind Singh followed the path of struggle in order to liberate the Hindu nation from the foreign rulers who had captured the Indian nation in an unauthorised manner.

There are several references in his works, a close study of which reveals that he gave new dimensions to the ancient tales in the context of the contemporary conditions. Guru Gobind Singh wanted that the Hindu masses should get inspiration from the deeds of the gods and goddesses and get armed so that the race could be defended and a strong foundation of a society might be laid after having put an end to injustice. Guru *Sahib* had no personal political ambition. He had followed that path of warrior, only to do his duty selflessly in the racial struggle. Thus it is clear that Guru Gobind Singh made a supreme sacrifice by participating in different wars in order to establish permanently the supremacy of the nation and the authority. At the same time, he achieved much success in arousing symbolically the feeling of national security among the masses.

Guru Gobind Singh was a great leader of the Indian culture. His struggle was not confined to the battle field only. On the other hand, he followed the path of struggle even through the pen by arousing in the masses a love for culture and belief in religion. During the 16th century, all the above mentioned characteristics of the Hindu race, facing the cruelties of the *Mughals*, were having a downfall. Hypocrisy, false customs and traditions and many other weaknesses were entering the Hindu race. The worldly comforts were given more importance than the real nature of religion which was being destroyed. In these circumstances, Guru Gobind Singh appeared as a liberator of mankind and destroyer of evil forces. First of all, he, by following the '*Neti*' form of *Brahma*, as described in the *Vedas*, the basic scriptures of the Indian culture, presented Him as invisible and immortal. Thereafter, taking into consideration the belief of the common people and demand of the age, he described God's visible form also. In fact, the aim of the Tenth Guru's life and literature was to begin a struggle against the evil rulers, and establish a peaceful and organised society for which he, by describing *Brahma* as fearful and destroyer of devils, encouraged the Hindus to get armed in order to defend the religion and culture. Besides, he opposed the false rituals openly, and declared that the easiest path to attain God was through polite prayer only. In accordance with the Indian culture, he believed in action. That is the reason why he, till his last, continued his armed struggle to free the Hindu race from the clutches of the oppressive rulers and to defend the racial honour. He never adopted a pessimistic outlook under the stress of the circumstances. On the other hand, he accepted the challenge and faced these very circumstances boldly. He laid the foundation of the '*Khalsa* Panth' to light a lamp of hopes in his soldiers. He believed that man, through determination, could always win a victory whether the struggle was inside him or outside. Perhaps that was the reason who, by singing the bravery of the gods and goddesses, tried to rekindle an optimistic outlook in the Hindu race.

Another, point greatly stressed was the purity of personal conduct. The above injunction - religious, social and economic were bound to elevate the personal character of individual member. Still, it was necessary to lay special stress on it because as a motive force it could be of great help in ensuring the success of these injunctions.

The hill chiefs who were alarmed by his increased strength and reforms were the first to be stirred into action. The Guru had already on more than one occasion shown them that he was more than a match for them individually or collectively. Still once again they wanted in the name of *Rajput Dharma* to exert their utmost to throw him out of their territory. Their determined resolution this time, produced a far more formidable effort than ever before. But success proved for them as illusive as ever in each action that came to pass the Guru rather than they had the upper hand. In utter dismay, they approached the Mughal authorities of Sirhind and Lahore who were already on the look out for an opportunity to strike at the increasing power of Guru Gobind Singh. Soon after, the combined forces of the Hindu *Rajas* and the Mughal officers laid siege to Anandpur where by now he had constructed a ring of forts all around the city. The allies had overwhelming number in comparison with those of the Guru. Still they failed to storm his forts and reduce him to submission. Failing that they resorted to the tactics of starving him to submission. This was more successful and more a serious dent into the supplies of the Sikhs. Even then the siege became protracted and they had to resort to the method of negotiations. The Guru and his brave Singhs had all through faced the hardships of the siege with exemplary courage and sang froid, making frequent sorties and inflicting heavy losses on the besiegers. Ultimately, however, finding the situation desperate, the Guru decided to quit but he did it in such a skilful manner that it was several hours before the fact could be discovered by the enemy. He was immediately pursued and attacked, in which his gallant commander Ude Singh kept the whole chasing force at bay till he himself fell a victim. The chase was continued and after some days Guru who was left only with forty men was surrounded in a mud house of a village, Chamkaur. Here again, he put up a heroic defence and for a whole day the enemy force dared not capture his position. The Guru, when the night fell, gave the enemy under pressure from his own people, a successful slip. For quite some weeks after that he could not be traced, and when at last he was able to strike back with the help of a few thousand people who had in the meantime gathered around him and achieved a convincing victory. Thereafter he was left alone, probably because the local officials found it a bit too difficult to dislodge him from his new position which was in the heart of his political base.

To a superficial observer Guru Gobind Singh died without having accomplished the revolution he had so much set his heart on but a deeper study will reveal that this is not so. By methods which only a genius could comprehend, he had created a nation and after giving it a revolutionary orientation had raised it up in arms against the tyrannical Mughal state. Furthermore, this nation had passed through an ordeal of fire under his personal leadership. As a result, a revolution had been affected in the minds of his people and it was only a matter of time that this should be externalised. The minds had been aroused to pitch of intensity that it was unlikely that a few reverses would depress or damp their spirits.

Banda as well as hundreds of his gallant men were awarded terrible punishments, which the rest of the community was outlawed and driven from post to pillar for about half century. They had to live in out of the way places such as forests and hills and suffered heavy losses both in human life and property. But they did not succumb to the imperial challenge even when it was presented by some of the strongest Mughal *Subedars* of the period like Abdus Samad Khan, Zakariya Khan and Mir Manu. After the middle of the century, an even stronger challenge appeared in the form of the Afghan invasions under Nadir Shah and also Ahmad Shah Abdali. This too, was successfully met and by 1765 A.D. sovereignty of the *Khalsa* in the Punjab had become a reality.

The driving force behind this quick advance to triumph and sovereignty was Guru Gobind Singh's institution of the Sikh commonwealth (Panth). It was the effective force of nationalism springing from a common membership of the same corporate entity that led the Sikhs through this prolonged period of ordeal and ultimately to prevail over all of their enemies from within as well as from out the country. Further more, the democratic character of this commonwealth enabled the community not only throw up leadership of the requisite calibre but also to evolve, conformably to their master's ideals, a suitable working constitution, popularly called *Gurmata*. The success with which this unique experiment in republicanism worked during the period of the Sikh struggle with the Mughals and Afghans justifies the great faith that Guru Gobind Singh had reposed in his people.

If we look at Guru Gobind Singh in the wider context or world history, he will be found to stand for a number of important ideas. The first of them is the unity of mankind. All differences of creed, caste and sex were declared by him as artificial barriers. Similarly, all geographical divergences creating walls between one country and another were pronounced by him to be man-made. "The temple and the mosque are the same; the Hindu worship and the *Musalman* prayer are the same; all men are the same, it is through error they appear different; the bright and the dark, ugly and the beautiful, the Hindus and Muslims have developed themselves according to the fashions of different countries. "All men have the same eyes; the same ears, the same body, the same build, a compound of earth, air, fire and water". "*Allah* and *Abbekh* are the same; the *Purans* and the *Quran* are the same; they are all alike; it is the one God who created all". "Recognise all human beings as members of one single family, whether they are Muslims or *Shias* or *Sunnis*".

Another great idea of his is what he thinks about the religion in society. He admits its elevating role for the individual and in fact lays no small stress on the importance for such spiritual values as love, faith, truth and purity. But he does not admit that it should begin and end with the individual or that its only social function should be to carry on peaceful propaganda of its essential principles. Such a religion, to say the least, is an inadequate instrument of social progress of welfare. The moral appeal on which it mainly rests, proves in actual life too weak or too soft to meet the rival forces of evil. Not often it happens that its peacefulness is misconstrued as submission which is then exploited to the detriment of the whole social system. In a situation like this, religion degenerates into a convenient tool in the hands of the State to befuddle, as with opium the rational faculty of the masses. The Guru, therefore, emphasises that if it is to discharge its ministry truly and for the good of the society, it must always have a revolutionary social role; that not only it must never have a truck with the antisocial forces, it must also be taken upon itself the positive role of eradicating such forces. As this is not always possible without the aid of forces, militarism is inevitably commanded as an essential auxiliary of the revolutionary functions of religion. Naturally, heroism and dexterity in the use of weapons are applauded. But a qualification is added that the use of force must only be a means to the attainment of a righteous cause and even then it should only be the remedy of the last resort. As to what is righteous cause, the stress is laid merely on self-defence but also on offence if it is to be employed against the forces of evil.

Guru Gobind Singh was the first person in the whole of the middle ages. who, for facing the unjust rulers, not only considered it necessary to organize an army but also in the social revolution, besides the physical and material bravery, in order to include spiritual and mental power, gave importance to the creation of folk literature. In order to bring about a revolution in an era of struggle, he, by giving up the romantic outlook, greeted the new age through the windows of the past. His entire literature is an immortal encyclopaedia of the Indian culture and the spiritual values. Although he belonged to the romantic period of outward show, his poetry is devoid of false praise of a ruler of the dancing steps of a heroine.

Another idea which had received considerably emphasis from Guru Gobind Singh is that political authority must always operate on ethical basis. God is the king of kings from whom all worldly kings derive their authority. They are thus bound by the divine mandate to exercise their authority conforming to the principles of equity and justice. In case they fail to do so, they lose their divine mandate and earn divine chastisement; but not only that for then the people are also entitled to rise in rebellion and overthrow them.

While it is correct that Sikhism is in its essence and orientation democratic, it must be clearly understood that the basis of modern political democracy was essentially numerical, while the kind of democracy visualized by the Guru is qualitative, as depending upon the guidance to the people coming from the noble and the wise is spirit. Without this basis, the fabric of the Guru's vision will not be erected. This has been seen in the course of Sikhs history. Wherever a leader had fallen from the ideal, however powerful or indispensable he might otherwise be, there will be no truck with his weaknesses or self-will (manmukhta).

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In this work, the author has made an humble attempt to examine afresh the personality and vision of Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth Master. He has tried to unravel the real significance of the creation of the Khalsa. The author has attempted to reach the empirical evidence and to understand the Sikh doctrine in its fullness. The ideas and ideology as given by the Tenth Master and also the creation of Khalsa were revolutionary steps in the making of the people wedded to the idea of struggle, spiritual as well as temporal. Guru's personality and his words inspired the people to transform this world into a new social order wherein the values of equality, love, justice, compassion and self-respect shall reign supreme. The author establishes that Guru Gobind Singh is truly a Guru of the whole humanity.

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